

AN *H. Va.*
ABRIDGEMENT
OF THE
SACRED HISTORY:
BEING AN EASY
INTRODUCTION
TO THE READING OF THE
HOLY BIBLE. *K*

From a Child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in CHRIST JESUS. *2 TIM. iii. 15.*

L O N D O N :

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M DCC LXX.

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DEDICATION

TO THE

GOVERNORS

AND

TRUSTEES

OF

CHARITABLE COMMUNITIES,

Particularly Such as have the
CARE of CHILDREN.

GENTLEMEN,

AS there cannot be a more generous and commendable disposition in the human mind, than a solicitous concern for the happiness of others, and the prosperity of the world; so the best service we can render to that important interest, is to promote the cause of Religion, and to make men wiser and bet-

iv DEDICATION.

ter ; to cultivate the knowledge of plain virtue among the poor, and cherish the spirit of truth and industry among them. The most able philosophers and lawgivers always considered the education of youth, as the most certain source of national welfare ; and, in some countries, the children were removed in former ages from the care of their own parents, and brought up under a regular discipline, established at the public expence.

The many wise and pious institutions, which rise up and flourish amongst us, bear some resemblance to this excellent pattern, and are happily calculated not only for the temporal relief, but for the eternal benefit of our fellow creatures : and I look, with pleasure, upon you, GENTLEMEN, who, from a real regard to the general good, stand forth as the *Governors* and *Trustees* of these charities, and kindly superintend these *labours of love*. Be animated with that zeal which becomes your station, and be the Guardians

DEDICATION. v

dians of the Souls of the poor as well as of their bodies. It is in your power, permit me to say, it is your province, it is your duty, to appoint proper officers and masters, and to inspect their conduct; to prescribe the methods of instruction, and put useful books into their hands; that so the hearts and understandings of those, who are partakers of your bounty, may be formed to piety and goodness, and be fitted for the different employments to which it shall please God to call them.

Short-sighted politicians may advance what doctrines they please; but the principle, which at any time restrains us from giving instructions of piety to the poor, is not less impolitic in a wordly sense, than it is irreligious in the sight of Heaven. Ignorance, especially in a land of freedom, creates a ferocity of manners, and an impatience of control, than which nothing can be more injurious to Government: but pure Religion

vi DEDICATION.

ligion has a natural tendency to civilize the mind; and, in proportion as it makes its progress in the hearts of men, it softens their natural roughness, and transforms them into new creatures; it inspires sentiments of mutual benevolence, and promotes the general interest of society; teaching men to adorn every station of life with the practice of those virtues which are suited to it, and making them good citizens; good fathers, good husbands, and good servants.

History is one of the best repositories of useful knowledge and instruction for both the moral and political world; but *sacred history* is very different from profane, and infinitely superior to it. The former relates only human and temporal events; but the latter opens an intercourse between Heaven and Earth, and reveals the History of Almighty GOD and his Providence. The former regards only the fate of particular nations, circumscribed within narrow bounds, and transmitted by partial writers in an imperfect,

D E D I C A T I O N. vii

perfect, perhaps a fabulous manner; but the latter, which is written by Divine inspiration, and is therefore Truth itself, gives an account of the beginning of the World, and the original of Man, and explains the great design and end of his creation: it also extends our view beyond this transitory world, and points out the way to another and better, *that new Heaven and new Earth, wherein dwells Righteousness*. Study the *Holy Scriptures*, says one of the acuteſt maſters* in the great ſcience of human underſtanding, as well as Chriſtian philoſophy, “ Study the *Holy Scriptures*, eſpecially the *New Teſtament*; therein “ are contained the words of eternal “ life. It has God for its Author, Sal- “ vation for its end; and Truth, with- “ out any mixture of error, for its mat- “ ter.”

The following pages are *an abridg- ment of the ſacred hiſtory*, and intended

* LOCKE.

viii D E D I C A T I O N.

to make the way plain and easy to it. They bring the *Old* and *New Testament* into a narrow compass, and are adapted to the meanest capacity, in order to be more extensively useful. If they prevent, in any measure, those confused notions, which are apt to prevail upon reading the *Scriptures* in an irregular desultory manner; if they engage any, in their tender years, to inquire into the Gospel of Truth with pleasure and understanding, without prejudice and partiality, the end will be answered, and the little labour amply recompensed.

This little book is therefore, with great deference and respect, offered to You, GENTLEMEN, as Ye are the Fathers of the poor, for whose benefit it is more immediately designed: and it solicits your protection and patronage with no other view, and in no higher degree, than as it tends to inspire religious sentiments, and to cultivate Truth and Virtue among mankind.

P R E-



P R E F A C E.

A Little observation upon the present state of Religion will convince us, That there is much more of the form than of the power of it amongst us; while we can have no doubt of our obligation, as far as our influence reaches, to cultivate and cherish the life and substance of it, and to make men real, instead of merely nominal Christians. This, however, is not to be expected, without the knowledge and understanding of Religion; for it is founded in light, and is a *reasonable service*. It is necessary to know Christianity, in order to receive it; and even the least improvement, either in Faith or Practice, depends upon knowledge.

It

It is an unhappy case, when they, who have the training up of the lowest, but most numerous part of the community, fall short of that important trust; yet there is reason to apprehend, that the failure in education arises not so much from the children, who are to learn, as from the superiors, who know not how to teach. To improve the understanding, and form the growing mind, is indeed a difficult science: it requires a clear judgment, a diligent attention, and a prudent address; instead of which we generally find a great degree of ignorance, indolence, and inexperience. A master should fully understand what he pretends to teach, and be capable of explaining, in free and easy language, the books which he puts into the hands of his pupils. He should cherish an affectionate concern for their welfare, and consider how much their happiness depends upon the faithful execution of his office. He should make himself acquainted with their humour, their disposition, and talents, and regulate his conduct accordingly. He should adapt their lessons and exercises to
their

their capacities, and, instead of resting in a formal reading, or verbal repetition of them, should study, by all means, to convey meaning and sentiment together with the words, and impress them deeply upon the heart.

The infant-mind must be gently and gradually instructed; some notions of Religion must be early insinuated into it; and the more simple and consistent these are, the more success may be expected. The difficulty is to find proper yet plain words to convey true ideas; to suit our expressions and address to the temper and apprehension of children; for no instruction can be profitable, if it is not comprehended, or if it wearies, embarrasses, or misleads them. A teacher cannot be too clear and intelligible: he should explain every term and phrase which occurs; he should not let a thought or a word pass, without its being understood; he should adapt every thing to the weakness of their capacities, and lead them on gently by the hand to higher degrees of knowledge. Thus indeed they will go on slowly, but still they will go forward,

ward, and whatever is done, will be done effectually. Short frequent exercises, suited to their age and abilities, make a deeper impression, and are more improving, than long heavy tasks, which grow irksome, to a degree even of disgust, and defeat the end of the teacher. In the school of Christ, as well as in any human science, the business must be done by insensible degrees; a little one day, and a little another; *line upon line, and precept upon precept*: thus they will grow in knowledge, as they do in stature, and become well established Christians; for, according to the just and beautiful observation of an excellent master *, “the minds of children are like vessels with narrow necks, which receive but little liquor, when it is poured upon them in abundance; but are insensibly filled, if it is poured in gently, and as it were drop by drop.”

Nothing is better adapted to fix in the minds of children what they read, than interrogating them frequently concerning it. For this purpose, it is recommended to question

* QUINTILIAN.

them

P R E F A C E. xiii

them at first upon the meaning of particular words and expressions ; from thence, according to their intellects, they may be called to give an account of the most easy passages, and repeat the substance of a story or page. In the doing of which, the master should point out the path, remove all difficulties in their way, remind them of the most material circumstances, and give them such assistance, as they stand in need of, till, by custom and diligence, they can do it alone. Some pains should be taken also to encourage the curiosity which is natural to children, that they may themselves ask questions, and inquire into the sense and meaning of expressions and things ; and then we should satisfy them readily and cheerfully, by clear and express answers, and commend them for their desire of knowledge and information. It is easy to comprehend, how useful this sort of exercise may be to expand the mind, to enlarge the understanding, to strengthen the memory, and to improve the judgment.

As the language of facts is more persuasive and powerful than that of words, great care should

should be taken in explaining the stories of the *Bible*, and imprinting them on the heart. These are calculated to please persons of the lowest capacity and dullest understanding, and at the same time inspire noble ideas. But we cannot be too cautious in severing the good part from the bad part of an example; that the name of a good man in the whole, may not be thought to justify any particular bad action. By proper observations on the characters which are there set forth, the understanding and inclinations of youth may be easily trained to goodness, and their memories enriched with powerful incitements to it. They may be fortified against the contagion of false prejudices and vicious customs; and be confirmed in this important truth, that *Virtue is the real good of Man*

The great art of education is to soften the bitterness of the work, and render it agreeable and pleasant. It may be impossible indeed, totally to divest young persons of the opinion, That learning is labor; but when it is enlivened with variety, and the affections are interested,

interested, knowledge becomes pleasant to the soul, and the mind seeks after it with greediness. The accustomed mode of putting the *Bible* into the hands of children, and causing them to read difficult and obscure passages, before they can have the least conception of what they are doing, and while they consider it as a burdensome and grievous task, naturally creates a dislike to the book, which it should be the greatest joy of their hearts to peruse; and many have contracted a prejudice against it in their youth, which has remained through their lives.

The design of this little Book, is to give a general idea of the historical and doctrinal parts of Scripture, in a plain intelligible manner; to infuse into the tender breast, some small taste and relish for the *Oracles of Truth*, and to kindle and cherish a desire of improving in spiritual knowledge: for it is desire, which stirs up all the powers of human nature to their proper exercise, and excites those affectionate and earnest endeavours which ensure success.

The cultivation of the mind depends wholly, in the beginning of its existence, on the care of the parents; and it is very natural for them to look with pleasing expectation upon their own off-spring, and to direct them in the paths of a religious education from the very state of infancy. Have you been the instruments of their being, and will you not strive to make that being agreeable and happy? Are you anxious for the mere preservation of their animal life, and can you neglect the nurture of their rational and spiritual part? Consider, they are immortal creatures, committed to your especial and immediate charge, by the great Father of all; and it is your indispensable duty, as far as is in your power, to preserve the precious trust. You are to watch the first dawnings of reason, and to form the rising thought; to cultivate the understanding in its tender state, and impress religious truths upon the mind, to open every blossom of piety and goodness, and cherish it to full maturity.

You should do this, by instilling good instructions in frequent and familiar conversation,

tion, and enforcing those instructions with the persuasive argument of an uniform example ; by being particularly attentive to those who associate with them, and having, in the choice of their companions and servants, a principal regard to their dispositions and morals. Nor let your care stop here ; extend it to the choice of schools and masters ; and let it be your determined resolution, to give the preference to those, who, while they grace the understandings of their pupils with the knowledge of all human science, make it an essential part of their employment to ground them in those principles of our Holy Religion, upon which their everlasting welfare depends.

T H E

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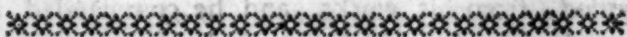
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AN
INTRODUCTION
TO THE READING OF THE
HOLY BIBLE.



CHAP. I.

The CREATION.

THE first Chapter of the Book of
T *Genesis* is the beginning of the
HOLY BIBLE, and gives an
account of the beginning of the
world. God Almighty made it, and all things
which are in it, in six days. He made the
Sun, Moon, and Stars; the earth and sea; the
birds, beasts, and fishes: He also made Man.
He formed him out of clay, then breathed in-
to his nostrils the breath of life, and called
him *Adam*, and gave him power over every
B thing

thing upon earth. And God said, *It is not fit for man to be alone*; and therefore he resolved to make a companion for him: so he caused *Adam* to fall into a sound sleep; then he took one of his ribs, and made a woman of it, and gave her to *Adam* to be his wife. God could have made the woman out of the dust of the earth, as well as the man; but he made her in this manner, to shew the love and tenderneſs which ought to be between husband and wife. *Adam* loved her exceedingly, and called her *Eve*. On the seventh day God rested, or ceased, from his works, and he commanded it to be kept holy for ever; and this is one of the reasons why we rest from labour and worldly business, and go to church every *Sunday*, and make it a holy day.

How great is the power of God! He made all things both in heaven and earth: He can do what he pleases; nothing can resist Him. He is also Goodness itself: He gave us life, and all that we have; and will give us every thing that is good, if we endeavour to be like Him in goodness.



C H A P. II.

The FALL of MAN.

OUR kind and gracious Creator, who is all goodness, and desirous to make us happy, placed *Adam* and *Eve* in a fine garden, called *Paradise*, or the garden of *Eden*; and He gave them every thing for their use and pleasure, except one tree, which stood in the middle of the garden, and was called the *Tree of Knowledge*. He forbid them to touch the fruit of that tree, assuring them, that, if they did touch it, they should die.

They lived very happy there for some time, and had nothing to trouble them, because they were good and innocent. And they might have continued there till God had taken them up into heaven, and made them angels, if they had not offended Him. But they ate of the fruit of that tree, which God had forbidden them to taste, and by their sin brought death upon themselves and all that belonged to them.

What could make them guilty of such a crime, when their life and happiness depended upon it? and how could they be brought to disobey God, who had done such great things for them? It was by hearkening to bad advice;

for that evil spirit, called the *Devil*, went to *Eve* in the shape of a *Serpent*. He was at first an angel in heaven, but was turned out for his pride, and now goes about doing all the evil he can, and tries to make others as wicked and miserable as himself, by putting bad thoughts into their heads, and tempting them to sin. With this bad design he went to *Eve*, and with many cunning compliments and speeches advised her to taste the forbidden fruit; and she was so foolish and so wicked as to be prevailed on by him. When she had eaten some of the fruit, she desired her husband to do the same, and he was persuaded to eat some too. They were however soon sensible of their crime; their consciences reproached them for having done wrong; and, being grieved and ashamed, they went to hide themselves behind the trees in the garden. All people that have done any wrong are troubled in mind, and indeed with reason, for God is angry with them; but good people are pleased with themselves, and have nothing to fear; for God loves them, and will protect and bless them.

These two unhappy persons, *Adam* and *Eve*, hoped, in their fright, to hide themselves from God; but there is no hiding ourselves from Him. He sees every thing, and knows every thing,

The DEATH of ABEL. 5

thing, even our thoughts. He is now present with us, and knows what we are doing, and what we are thinking of. He therefore called to them, and asked them, Why they had eaten the fruit which he had commanded them not to touch. They tried immediately to excuse themselves: *Adam* said, that his wife had persuaded him, and *Eve* said, that the serpent had deceived her; but God is not to be put off with excuses: we must obey his commands, or be punished. So he directly turned them out of that garden, where the finest fruits and flowers grew in abundance, and sent them to wander about in a wild country, over-grown with briars, where they had nothing to eat, but what they dug and laboured hard for. There they grew old and sickly, and at length died.

C H A P. III.

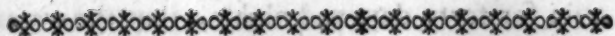
The DEATH of ABEL.

A D A M and *Eve* had two sons, *Cain* and *Abel*. *Abel* was a keeper of sheep, and *Cain* was a tiller of the ground. *Abel* was mild and obedient to God and his parents; but *Cain* was obstinate and ill-natured; and there-

6 The DEATH of ABEL.

fore when they made an offering unto the Lord, *Abel* of the firstlings of his flock, and *Cain* of the fruits of the earth, God had respect unto *Abel* and his offering, but unto *Cain* and his offering He had not respect. *Cain*, however, instead of mending his temper, and growing kinder and better, hated that good young man more and more. He should have tried to become like him, and then God would have loved him as well as the other. At length, however, his envy and passion grew to such a height, that one day, when they were together in a field, he fell upon his brother *Abel*, and killed him. He thought they were alone, and that no body would ever know it; but God, who is a Spirit, and has not flesh or bones as we have, is in all places at once: He therefore was witness to the cruel murder of *Abel*, and, calling *Cain*, accused him of the bloody fact, and then drove him away from his parents and relations into a strange country. *Cain*, after having wandered about a long while, as a fugitive and a vagabond, settled in the land of *Nod*: but the sense of his guilt still went along with him: he was fearful of every thing he saw or heard, and was very unhappy and miserable as long as he lived.

CHAP.



CHAP. IV.

The FLOOD.

ADAM and *Eve* had another son, besides *Cain* and *Abel*, called *Seth*, and several other children, both sons and daughters; and the number of people was by degrees very much increased upon the earth. But in a long course of time, for want of good instruction and pious example, the people forgot God, and gave themselves up to every kind of wickedness, till at last the Almighty was so offended with them, that he resolved to destroy the whole world by a flood of waters.

There was, however, among them one good man, called *Noah*, who worshipped and served God, and whom, therefore, God was pleased to save from destruction. To this purpose He directed him to make a kind of vessel, called an *Ark*, like a large covered boat, and, when it was finished, to go into it with all his family, and to take some of all sorts of beasts, and birds, and creeping things, that they also might be preserved from the flood.

When this was done, God sent so much rain for forty days and nights, that the waters rose up to the tops of the houses and of the trees on the highest mountains, so that the men, women, and children, upon the earth, were every one drowned. But *Noah's* ark floated safely upon the waters, and no mischief befel him, for God took care of him. After some time, the rain being stopped, God sent a strong wind, and made the waters fall lower and lower, by degrees, till at last the ark rested upon a high mountain, called *Mount Ararat*. *Noah* then opened a window, and let out a raven, which often went backwards and forwards, in and out of the ark. After seven days *Noah* let out a dove, but it flew back to him very soon, because it could find no dry place to rest upon. In seven days more he let out the dove again, and it came back with an olive branch in its bill. *Noah* knew by this that the waters were almost dried off the earth; and when he had let out the bird again, it came back to him no more. He soon after ventured to open the door, and go out with all his family. They immediately kneeled down and poured forth their thanks to God for their preservation and safety. We should, with fervent gratitude, praise Him for every blessing we enjoy: for He is the *Father of mercies, and the au-*
thor

thor of every good gift. God was so pleased with seeing *Noah* thankful, that he blessed him, and made a sacred promise to him, That He would not any more destroy the world by a flood; and He appointed the rainbow to be a token of his promise, which can never be broken. *Noah* lived a great while after this with his wife, his three sons, and their wives and children; and at last, in a good old age, he died, and went to heaven, to be happy for ever.

When a person dies, the soul goes out of the body; the body is then buried under ground, and returns to dust; but the soul, which is the better part of us, never dies. The souls of the good go to Heaven, where they live with God, and are happy for ever; but the souls of bad people are carried to a place of torments, called *Hell*, where they are for ever miserable. How careful, therefore, should we be to please God, and make Him our friend? Consider, that all our happiness, both now and for ever, depends entirely upon Him.



C H A P. V.

The Confusion of BABEL.

N O A H left three sons, *Shem, Ham,* and *Japhet*, whose children increased exceedingly, so that they entertained a fond conceit of their own number and strength, and resolved to build a very high tower, which should reach the clouds, to be a monument or mark of their great power: but God, seeing their pride, confounded them, and made it a monument of their folly. Before they began to build, they all spoke the same language; but he caused them, as they were at work, to speak, one in one language, and one in another, so that they could not understand each other. This occasioned such confusion among them, that the building could not go on; therefore they divided themselves into several parties, according as they understood each other's language or dialect; and leaving *Babel*, the *tower of confusion*, dispersed themselves over the face of the earth.

The Destruction of S O D O M. 11

It is very foolish to follow our own whims and fancies, and especially, if they rise from pride and vanity. When we intend to do any thing, we should consider whether it is agreeable to God or no : for, if it is not agreeable to Him, He can easily hinder us from doing it, or punish us when it is done. We should therefore try to like what God likes, because it is in vain to wish for any thing without his approbation, and he knows best what is good for us.



C H A P. VI.

The Destruction of S O D O M.

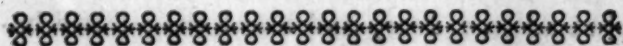
SOME time after this, there was a very good man, called *Abraham*, who had with him a nephew, his brother's son, called *Lot*; and he also was a good man. So God loved them both, and they became very rich, and had so many cattle and servants, that the place where they lived was not large enough to contain them, and their servants began to dispute with each other, for want of room. *Abraham* knew it was a great sin to dispute or quarrel, especially among relations; he therefore, in a friendly manner, proposed to *Lot*, that they should part. Do you go where you

12 *The Destruction of SODOM.*

like best, says he, and I will stay in the land of *Canaan*, or go wherever God pleases. Then *Lot* left his uncle, and went to live near *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*. The people of those two cities were very wicked; so wicked, that God intended to destroy them, and the cities in which they dwelt: but as *Lot* was a good man, he sent two angels to save him. Angels are not men, but spirits; they live in heaven, but are often said in the *Bible*, to appear like men upon earth. God created them for his service, sends them as his messengers, and employs them as he thinks fit. When they came to *Lot's* house, he took them for travellers, and received them very civilly: good people are always obliging, especially to strangers. After dinner the angels told him what they were, and that God had sent them to take him, and his family, out of that wicked place; adding, that they must leave it directly, and not once look behind. *Lot*, his wife, and his two daughters, set out immediately with the angels; but *Lot's* wife disobeyed God, for, out of a vain curiosity, she looked behind her, and for so doing was turned into a pillar of salt. Then God sent fire and brimstone from heaven upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, which destroyed those two cities, and all the people in them perished. In the mean time *Lot* went on safely to the land of *Moab*,

The Life of ABRAHAM. 13

Moab, with his two daughters, where he lived to a good old age. His daughters had sons, from whom came the people, called *Moabites* and *Ammonites*.



C H A P. VII.

The Life of ABRAHAM.

ABRAM, after his nephew *Lot* had left him, lived in the land of *Canaan*, with his wife *Sarah*. He brought up his family, and all that belonged to him, in the knowledge and worship of the true God, for which God loved him exceedingly. Now, as yet, *Sarah* had no child, and therefore God told *Abraham*, that *Sarah* should have a son, and that all the people of the earth should be blessed through him. The meaning of which was, that after a long time a person would be born in his family, who should be the Saviour of the world, and a blessing to all nations.

Several years, however, passed away after this promise, and still *Sarah* had no child. *Abraham* indeed was very easy about this; for knowing that what God promises He always per-

14 *The Life of* ABRAHAM.

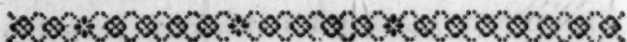
performs in his own good time, he waited with patience. One day, as he was sitting at the door of his tent, three angels came to him, and told him God remembered his promise, and *Sarah* should soon have a son. She was behind the door, and heard them; and because she was now grown very old, she did not believe the word of the angels, but laughed at what they said; tho' she might and should have remembered, that God Almighty can do what he pleases.

Soon after she had a son, and he was called *Isaac*. He was a comfort and blessing to his parents. When he was a great boy, God was pleased to put *Abraham* to a heavy trial, in order to shew his faith in Him, and obedience to his commands, and to teach us all to love God above every thing upon earth, and to give up our children, our lives, or any thing else to Him, whenever He calls for it. He commanded him to take *Isaac* to a high mountain, and there offer him up as a burnt-offering; first killing him, and then burning his dead body. And tho' *Isaac* was his son, his only son, and he loved him with all the affection of a tender father, yet he did not murmur at the command; for he was always ready to do whatever pleased God. Accordingly, the next morning

ing he got all things ready, and, tho' grieved to the heart, took the boy with him to the mountain, tied his hands and feet, and was just going to give the deadly stroke, when God called to him from heaven and forbad him; telling him, that he only meant to try him for an example to others: and this great act of faith and trust in God gained *Abraham* the glorious name of *Father of the faithful*. He came down from the mountain, very joyfully, with his son, and God renewed his promise to him, and told him that he would bless him very abundantly, and multiply his family, *And in thy seed, says He, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.* After some time *Sarah* died, and *Abraham* buried her, and mourned for her; and now, being grown old, he began to think of a wife for *Isaac*. He did not like any of the women of that country where he lived, because they were not well behaved; therefore he sent an old faithful servant into his own country among his relations, to get a wife for his son. When the servant came near the city of *Nachor*, in *Mesopotamia*, he stopped at a well, and kneeled down to pray for God's blessing; for he knew nothing could be done without that. And he prayed to God Almighty, that he would send to the well

well the woman he chose for his master's son, *Isaac*; and that, when he asked her to draw water for him, she might answer, I will give you water, and to your camels also; by which he should know that she was the woman God had sent. The Almighty heard his prayer, for soon after *Rebekah*, the cousin of *Isaac*, came. He asked her for water, and she said, I will give you water, and to your camels also. Then he thanked God for having graciously answered his prayer, and went with her to her father; and, having assured him that he came from *Abraham*, asked his consent to the marriage. The father consented, and so did *Rebekah*, and she went with the messenger to the land of *Canaan*, where she was married to *Isaac*, and made him a very good wife.

Abraham, being at length worn out with old age, left this world to go to a better place. He was buried in the cave, where his beloved *Sarah* was laid, and left a great and glorious name behind him.



C H A P. VIII.

The Life of ISAAC.

I*SAAC* was obliged to remove out of the country in which he lived, on account of a severe famine, and he went to *Gerar*, where
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Abimelech was king : and there God appeared to him, and renewed the promise which He had made to his father *Abraham*. But his servants and cattle increased there in such abundance, that the people envied his prosperity, and the king himself desired him to quit the place. Upon this, *Isaac*, who was of a meek and gentle disposition, retired quietly to the valley of *Gerar*, and afterwards to *Beersheba*, where he built an altar to the Lord.

Isaac and *Rebekah* had two sons : the eldest was called *Esau*, and the youngest *Jacob*. *Esau* loved hunting and sporting, but *Jacob* staid at home with his father and mother. One day, as *Jacob* was making some pottage for himself, *Esau* came home from the fields very hungry, and desired *Jacob* to give him his pottage. *Jacob* asked him, if he would give him his birth-right for it ; and he said, he would. His birth-right was his father's particular blessing, which in those days always belonged to the eldest son, and *Esau* was such a glutton as to sell it for a mess of pottage. Perhaps he thought that he should not live so long as his father, because of the dangers he run in hunting, and therefore set little value upon his birth-right, and readily gave it up for the soup which he so greedily longed for. *Isaac* was not

acquainted with this bargain ; so, when he was very old and quite blind, thinking he was about to die, he called his son *Eſau* to him, and deſired him to get ſome veniſon, and, when it was dreſſed, to bring it to him, for he was very faint. And he told him, that when he had eaten, he would give him his bleſſing. *Eſau* ſhould then have told his father, that he ſhould give the bleſſing to *Jacob*, to whom he had ſold it ; but, inſtead of that, he made haſte to get the veniſon. *Rebekah* knew all that had paſſed ; but ſhe thought it was better not to let her husband know it, becauſe it would grieve him to find that his ſon, *Eſau* was not honeſt. However, ſhe bid *Jacob* take ſome kid and go to his father before *Eſau* came home, that *Iſaac*, miſtaking him for *Eſau* with the veniſon, might give him the bleſſing which was due to him. *Jacob* told her, he was afraid his father would know him, when he felt his hands ; for *Jacob* had ſmooth hands, but *Eſau*'s were hairy. *Rebekah* therefore covered his neck and hands with the ſkin of the kid, putting the rough part outward ; and then giving him the kid, which ſhe had dreſſed with ſavoury ſauce, ſhe ſent him to his father. When *Iſaac* felt his rough hands he thought it was *Eſau*, and gave him his bleſſing, accord-

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ing to the will of God, who had chosen *Jacob* before *Esau*.

Rebekah and *Jacob* did not do right in deceiving *Isaac*; for we should never tell a lie, whatever we may get by it: it is a very great fault always, but more especially in a wife to her husband, or in a son to his parent. God indeed had designed the blessing for *Jacob*, and they should have trusted in God, and waited for him to give it, when, and in what manner, he pleased: they might also have discoursed with *Isaac* about it, and reasoned him into it. But *Rebekah*, fearing that *Isaac* would give the blessing to *Esau*, contrived that her husband should do what was right, without his knowing it. God was pleased to let the blessing pass by these means, and seems to have convinced *Isaac*, by some secret method, that he had given the blessing to the right person; for when he knew afterwards what was done, he was not angry with his wife, or with *Jacob*: for he said, *I have blessed him; yea, and he shall be blessed.*



C H A P. IX.

The Life of J A C O B.

ESAU was very angry with *Jacob*, when he heard that he had gotten the blessing from him, and swore, that when his father was dead,

dead, he would kill his brother. Surely he did not recollect the story of *Cain*, who killed his brother *Abel*, and how God punished him for it. *Rebekah* was told what *Esau* had said, and therefore advised *Jacob* to go away. *Isaac* also gave him leave to go, desiring him to take a wife amongst his own relations, as he himself had done. So *Jacob* went to *Laban*, his mother's brother, who lived in the same place from whence *Abraham's* servant had taken *Rebekah* for his father *Isaac*.

Jacob travelled on till it was dark, and was forced to take up his lodging in a field, with a hard stone for his pillow. While he slept, he dreamed that he saw a great ladder, the top of which reached to the heavens, and the angels of God ascended and descended upon it. He dreamed also, that God Almighty called to him from the top of it, and told him, that He was the God of *Abraham* and of *Isaac*, and would bless him likewise: that He would be with him, and protect him whithersoever he went: that his posterity should be very numerous; and that all the families of the earth should be blessed through him.

The next morning, as soon as *Jacob* had praised God, as all good people do night and morning, he went on his journey, till he came to the well where *Abraham's* servant met his

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mother *Rebekah*; and, in a little time after he had stopped there, he saw a young woman, called *Rachel*, one of the daughters of *Laban*, coming with a flock of sheep, to give them water; and, in a very civil and good-natured manner, he ran and drew the water for her. He then made himself known to her, and went home with her to *Laban*, his uncle, who was very glad to see his sister *Rebekah's* son, and desired him to stay and live with him. Soon after *Jacob* desired *Laban* to let him marry *Rachel*; and *Laban* told him, he would give his consent, if he would serve him seven years. *Jacob* agreed to it, and served him very honestly and faithfully; but, at the end of the seven years, *Laban* was so bad a man, that he broke his promise, and, instead of *Rachel*, gave him his eldest daughter *Leah* for a wife. *Jacob* was very sorry at this, because he did not love *Leah* so well as *Rachel*, and he asked *Laban* the reason of having done so. *Laban* said, he did it, because it was the custom of that country to marry the eldest daughter first, but if he would serve him seven years more, he should have *Rachel* likewise. In those days God Almighty allowed men to have more wives than one, though he does not allow it now: and then, likewise, he allowed very near relations to marry one another: but he afterwards

wards forbad such marriages, and therefore now there is great sin in them. God acts from wise and good reasons, and always does what is for the best. As for *Jacob*, he was so desirous to marry *Rachel*, that he consented to every thing; and he married her, and served *Laban* seven years more for her. He was so diligent and industrious, and behaved so well, that God prospered every thing he undertook. He also blessed him with several children, twelve sons* and one daughter, called *Dinah*; but there were only two of the sons who belonged to *Rachel*, and their names were *Joseph* and *Benjamin*. At length *Jacob*, finding his family so large, desired to leave *Laban*, and go home to his own country, and his father's house. But *Laban*, who was a selfish man, and thought of nothing but his own interest, pressed him to stay longer, because he was very useful to him, and made him an offer of much cattle for his service. *Jacob* therefore made a new agreement with him; and God, who is always the friend of the oppressed, favoured *Jacob*, and blessed him, and increased his family

* The names of *Jacob's* twelve sons were, *Reuben*, *Simeon*, *Levi*, *Judah*, *Dan*, *Naphtali*, *Gad*, *Asher*, *Issachar*, *Zebulun*, *Joseph*, and *Benjamin*,

and his cattle. And after six years, because *Laban* and his sons still behaved very ill to him, and grudged him every thing, he resolved to leave them. And accordingly he returned into his own country, with his wives and children, his servants, his cattle, and all his goods.

When they had gone great part of the way, he sent some servants to his brother *Esau*, desiring his favour and friendship; and they came back to him, and told him, that *Esau* was coming to meet him with four hundred men. He was very much alarmed with this news, and did not know what to do, for he dreaded some mischief to his tender family. Wise people always pray to God when they are in trouble, and trust in Him for relief. *Jacob* therefore prayed fervently, and God directed him what to do. He picked out some of the finest of his cattle, and of the best things he had, and sent them before him, telling his servants, That, when *Esau* should meet them, and ask, Whose they were, and whither they were going? they should say, in a very civil and obliging manner, They are thy servant *Jacob's*; it is a present sent unto his brother *Esau*. *A soft answer turneth away wrath.* *Esau* was so moved at *Jacob's* mild and obliging behaviour, that all his anger vanished;
and

and when *Jacob* came near, and kneeled down to him, *Esau* took him up and kissed him, and they were very good friends. This made *Jacob* very happy; for a good-natured man loves quietness, and to be in peace with all men. After some friendly conversation between them, they parted. *Esau* returned to *Mount Seir*, in the land of *Edom*, where he lived; and *Jacob* travelled on towards the land of *Canaan*, where *Abraham* and *Isaac* had lived. In his way to it he stopped at a place, called *Sichem*, and pitched his tents there, and built an altar to the Lord. Then his daughter *Dinah*; out of a silly curiosity, went to visit the girls of that country, and see the fashions of the place; and when she was abroad, one of the young men of the place, son to the king, seized her, and ran away with her, and used her very ill. When her brothers heard of it, they went after her, and brought her back; but they were violent and cruel in their anger, for they killed several people, and took away many women and children, and their cattle. After these things, which grieved *Jacob* very much, he went on his journey, and came to the land of *Canaan*; but his wife *Rachel* died by the way. About this time God Almighty was pleased to signify

signify to *Jacob* by an angel, that he should take the surname of *Israel*.



C H A P. X.

The History of JOSEPH.

JACOB was deeply afflicted for the loss of *Rachel*, and was fonder of *Joseph* than of his other children, because he was her eldest son; but his brothers hated him, because their father loved him so much. Bad people often hate the good out of jealousy, and endeavour to do them an injury; but God is their friend, and therefore they are safe.

Joseph dreamed one night, that he was in a field with his brothers, binding sheaves of corn, and that his sheaf stood upright, and their sheaves bowed down to it. *Joseph*, very innocently, told his brothers this dream, and another dream which was like it; but they were quite angry when they heard them; for they saw the meaning, that *Joseph* was to be set above them; and they said, *Shalt thou indeed reign over us? and they hated him the more for his words.*

One day when they were in the fields, a great way from home, taking care of the flock, *Joseph* went to ask after their welfare; and, as they saw him coming, they cried out, Here is the dreamer, let us kill him: but *Reuben*, the elder brother, had pity and compassion, and said, No, we will not stain our hands with a brother's blood, but we will strip him, and throw him into a pit. He said this to turn away their anger, intending to take him out of the pit afterwards, and restore him to his father. They agreed to the proposal, and cast him into the pit; but soon after they drew him out from thence, and sold him to some merchants, who were going into *Egypt*. Then they dipped *Joseph's* coat in the blood of a kid, and brought it to their father *Jacob*, who concluded from it, that a wild beast had torn *Joseph* to pieces, and devoured him. *Jacob* was in very great affliction for the loss of so good a child, and his wicked sons were so hard-hearted as to see him suffer, and grieve mournfully, without telling him the truth. But God Almighty directs every thing for the best, and his Holy Spirit went with *Joseph* into the land of *Egypt*, where the merchants sold him to one *Potiphar*, a great man: and he behaved so well in his
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service, that his master had a particular regard for him, and made him his steward, and the manager of his affairs. But *Potiphar's* wife was a wicked woman, and wanted to make *Joseph* wicked likewise: however he was too wise and good to give way to temptation; and when she could not persuade him to be wicked, she accused him, out of spite and malice, of a great crime to her husband. *Potiphar*, too readily believing all she said, was very angry, and put him into prison. But God was with the innocent youth in the prison, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper, who was so pleased with his good temper and behaviour, that he grew very fond of him; and, instead of binding him down with chains, let him go about the house. It happened that the chief baker of king *Pharaoh*, and his chief butler, whom they called his cup-bearer, were confined in the same prison, and *Joseph* had the charge or care of them. These persons dreamed, each a dream. The chief baker dreamed, that he had three baskets upon his head, full of baked meats for the king's table, and that the birds of the air came and devoured them. And the butler dreamed, that he held three branches of a vine-tree in his hand, which were full of

C 2 grapes,

28 *The History of JOSEPH.*

grapes, and that, having squeezed them into a cup, he gave the wine to the king. They were both very uneasy to know what these dreams could mean, and *Joseph* saw, by their countenance, that they were troubled. He therefore asked the cause of it, and they told him their dreams, and that they were uneasy because they wanted to know the meaning of them.

Dreams very seldom have any meaning at all, and it is foolish to be concerned about them. But sometimes God Almighty directs them for wise reasons of his own. *Joseph* received understanding and wisdom from God to explain those dreams to them. He told the baker, that in three days *Pharaoh* would order him to be hanged on a tree, and his body would be eaten by birds of prey. And he told the cup-bearer, that in three days he should have his former place, and fill out wine to the king; and then, says he, *think on me, and shew kindness, I pray thee, and take me out of this house.* As he had said, so it came to pass. But the cup-bearer, being restored to favour, forgot the fair promises he had made to *Joseph*. He was taken up with enjoying his own good fortune, and did not be-

bestow one kind thought on his poor friend in prison for full two years.

At the end of that time *Pharaoh* himself had two extraordinary dreams, and was very desirous to have them interpreted or explained, but none of the wise people of that country could understand them. They were sent by God, and could not be understood and interpreted without his assistance.

This particular occasion reminded the chief butler of *Joseph*, and he told the king of him; and the king sent for him out of prison, and related to him the two dreams. *Behold*, says he, *I saw seven fat oxen come out of a river, and feed in a meadow; and afterwards seven lean oxen came and devoured the fat ones. And behold again, I saw seven full ears of corn on one stalk, and seven thin and withered ears of corn came up after them, and devoured them.* *Joseph* would not take that praise to himself which was due to another, and therefore told *Pharaoh*, that he interpreted dreams not by his own power, but by the power and assistance of God. He then explained his dreams: That there would be seven years of great plenty in the land, which were meant by the seven fat oxen, and seven full ears of corn; and that after them there would be seven years

30 *The History of* JOSEPH.

of famine and want, when no corn would grow in the land, and they were signified by the seven lean oxen and thin ears of corn. Let therefore *Pharaoh*, says he, look out a wise man, and set him over the land; and let him, in the years of plenty, lay up corn in granaries, and then in the seven years of famine there will be corn, and the people will have bread to eat.

When the king found that God had made *Joseph* so wise, he set him over his house and his kingdom, and commanded all the people to obey him. *Joseph*, having such great wisdom and such great power, took care, in the seven years of plenty, to gather the food into granaries and proper places, and provide corn sufficient to feed the people when the famine came; and the king had such dependance on him, that when any persons came to him about publick affairs he sent them to *Joseph*.

The famine spread itself over all countries, even to *Canaan*, where *Jacob* lived, who, being told there was corn in *Egypt*, tho' he little thought by whose hand it was disposed of, ordered his sons to go down thither; only he kept at home *Benjamin*, his youngest son, the other son of his beloved wife *Rachel*. When they were presented to *Joseph*, they bowed

bowed themselves before him, as was foretold by his dream; and he knew them, but they did not know him; and he asked them, if their father was alive, and if they had any more brothers. They told him, that their father had twelve sons; but one, called *Joseph*, was dead, and the other, called *Benjamin*, was at home with their father. *Joseph* was dissatisfied, because *Benjamin* was not with them, and perhaps doubted whether he was really alive: he therefore spoke harshly to them, and called them spies, and put them into prison. They immediately considered this distress, as a punishment for their cruelty and hardness of heart toward *Joseph*, and said, *We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.* Their self-accusations are a strong proof of the power of conscience, and the benefit of a good education, which greatly strengthens and enforces it. Men can never totally root out the sense of good and evil, which the Almighty has implanted in their hearts. They acknowledge the divine law to be just and good, even while they contradict it in their actions; and, when vengeance comes to shew itself,

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they shall be the first to accuse themselves, and own the justice of their punishment.

After three days he called them out of prison, and having bound *Simeon*, that he might remain, as a pledge, till the rest should return with *Benjamin*, he dismissed them, and they went home to their father: and, when they opened their sacks, they found the money with the corn: for *Joseph* had ordered his servants to put it there.

The account of what had passed filled *Jacob* with grief, and brought to his mind the loss of his beloved son *Joseph*. And when the corn was eaten, and his sons declared they could not go to *Egypt* for more without *Benjamin*, he refused to let him go; for, says he, *if mischief befall him by the way, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave*. But, at last, seeing the urgent necessity for their departure, and being again and again assured by them, that they would bring him back to him, he suffered his dear *Benjamin* to go. And he charged them to take double the money they had found in their sacks, and prayed earnestly to God to bless them, and give them a safe return.

When they came to *Egypt*, they were carried directly to *Joseph*, who, with dutiful
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affection, enquired after his father's welfare; and seeing his brother *Benjamin*, his mother *Rachel's* child, his heart was melted with tenderness: tears of love burst into his eyes, and he turned away that they might not see him. He afterwards invited them to dinner, and sat down to eat with them. *Joseph* had privately ordered his servants, after they had filled their sacks with corn, to put his golden cup into the mouth of *Benjamin's* sack, and to follow his brothers as soon as they were gone out of the city, and ask them, how they could be so ungrateful to their master, as to steal his cup, and carry it away. This was done accordingly; and when the sacks were opened, the cup was found in *Benjamin's* sack; upon which the servants carried him back to *Joseph*; and his brothers also returned in great affliction, and, falling upon their knees, intreated for him: and *Judah*, in the most earnest and pathetick manner, begged, that *Benjamin* might be permitted to go home, and that he might remain a bond-man in his stead; for, says he, *I became surety for the lad unto my father, and my father's life is bound up in his life. If the lad does not return, I shall bring down the grey hairs of thy servant, our father, with sorrow to the grave.*

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Joseph was so affected, that he could refrain no longer, but, throwing his arms about their necks, said, *I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?* And when they could not answer, being troubled at his presence, he spoke gently to them, and said, *Come near me, I pray you; I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt; but be not grieved, that ye sold me into Egypt, for God sent me before you to preserve life. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.* Thus he endeavoured to quiet their minds: he saw that they were sorry for their fault, and he forgave them, and God forgave them. We should be ready to forgive others, as God is ready to forgive us. He then bid them hasten back to their father, and tell him, that *Joseph* was alive, and in favour with God and man; and that he desired him, and his whole family, to come and dwell in *Egypt*, where they should partake of the plenty which had been provided.

The joyful news affected the heart of *Jacob* exceedingly; and he said, *It is enough* (I desire nothing more in this world) *Joseph, my son, is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die.* Accordingly he went down into *Egypt*; but words cannot express the pleasure of their meet-

The Slavery of the ISRAELITES. 35

meeting: tears of joy flowed from both on seeing each other.

Joseph, you see, was not like many wicked men, who, when they have got great riches, forget their duty to their parents, and will do nothing to comfort and help them in their old age. He sent for him, and all his family, and fixed them in the most fruitful part of *Egypt*, which was called the land of *Goshen*, where they lived in plenty: and after some time the good old *Jacob*, having blessed his children, died in peace.



C H A P. XI.

*The Slavery of the ISRAELITES, and
the Birth of MOSES.*

THE twelve sons of *Jacob* had many children, and in time these also had many more; so that they increased exceedingly, and the land of *Goshen* was filled with them. They were called the children of *Israel*, or *Israelites*, because of the surname of *Israel*, which God had given to *Jacob*, and sometimes they were called *Hebrews*. After some time another *Pharaoh* succeeded to the throne, who never knew *Joseph*, or the good things he had done for *Egypt*: who, being a

36 *The Slavery of the ISRAELITES,*

very bad man, and seeing the great number of *Israelites* and their riches, envied them, and hated them; and therefore made them work, like slaves, in digging clay, and making bricks, and building cities. But still he found their numbers increasing more and more; and he was so enraged about it, and so cruel, that he ordered his servants to destroy the male-infants of the *Hebrews*, as soon as they were born; and many innocent children were destroyed. But a *Hebrew* woman, called *Jochebed*, having been delivered of a son, put him into a basket, and carrying it to the river *Nile*, set it among the rushes. She then went a little way off, and left her daughter *Miriam* to see what would become of it.

Soon after the king's daughter came with her maid-servants to bathe in the river, and, when she heard the child cry, she pitied him, and seeing *Miriam*, sent her for a nurse, and she brought *Jochebed*. So the child was nursed by its own mother: and being afterwards brought back to *Pharaoh's* daughter, she called him *Moses*, and he was instructed in the knowledge and wisdom of the *Egyptians*.

When *Moses* became a man, he returned to his brethren; and one day, seeing an *Egyptian* using a *Hebrew* very ill, he was so provoked

woked at it, as to strike the *Egyptian* and kill him; and being afraid of a discovery, and consequently of being put to death, he fled to the land of *Midian*. The priest or minister of that country was called *Jethro*, who was so pleased with the good temper and behaviour of *Moses*, that he married his daughter to him, and he lived with *Jethro*, and took care of his sheep.

One day, as *Moses* was in the fields, feeding his father-in-law's flocks, he saw a bush flaming with fire, without being consumed; and, as he drew near to observe the cause of it, he heard a voice out of the bush, saying, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. I have seen the oppression of my people, and I have heard their cries and prayers; and I will send you to Pharaoh, that thou mayest lead them out of Egypt; for I will bring them into a land, flowing with milk and honey.* *Moses* was struck with reverence and awe, and, falling upon the ground, began to excuse himself, on account of his weakness and inability. But God assured him, That He himself would assist him, and would give him a power of working

38 *Of the Plagues of EGYPT:*

ing miracles for the conviction of the people ; and that *Aaron*, his brother, should meet him in the way, and go with him as his speaker, or orator, upon the occasion.



C H A P. XII.

Of the Plagues of EGYPT.

MOSE S, in obedience to the command of God, went into *Egypt* with *Aaron* his brother, and being admitted into the presence of *Pharaoh*, they demanded of him, in the name of the Lord God of *Israel*, that he would let the people go into the wilderness, to hold a religious feast unto Him. But the king was so wicked as to laugh at what they said, and to impose more work upon the *Hebrews* for it ; upon which God, to punish him, as also to shew his own power, turned all the waters of *Egypt* into blood, and all the fish died. And, seven days after, he sent a great quantity of frogs, so as to cover the whole land, and swarm even in the rooms and chambers of the king. *Pharaoh* was a little humbled at this, and he intreated *Moses* to pray to God for relief, and promised to let

let the *Hebrews* go. God heard the prayer of *Moses*, and granted his request; but when the frogs were gone, the king refused to keep his promise. God Almighty has many ways and means to punish the perverse and obstinate. He then turned the dust into lice, and they were upon man and upon beast; and He filled the houses of *Pharaoh*, and his people, with large flies, which greatly tormented them, and corrupted the land. The king again desired *Moses* to pray for him; and immediately, upon his entreaty, these plagues also were removed. But still *Pharaoh* hardened his heart, and would not let the children of *Israel* go. Then God sent a sickness among the ~~cattle~~, that they almost all died; and sickness among the people, so that they were all covered with sores, and boils, and ulcers; and afterwards storms of hail, which killed all those it fell upon, both man and beast. *Pharaoh* applied again to *Moses*; but as soon as the sickness and hail were over, he hardened his heart again, and would not let the children of *Israel* go. Then God sent a strong wind, that brought with it a great number of locusts, which devoured all the fruits of the earth, so that there remained not any green thing on the trees or the herbs of the field: and
after-

40 *Of the Plagues of EGYPT.*

afterwards a thick and heavy darkness, so that the people could not stir out of their places. *Pharaoh* could not but feel these sharp evils and calamities: again he sent for *Moses*; again the plagues were removed, and again he hardened his heart. It is too often so in common life: when God lays his hand upon men, and afflicts them for their sins, they cry out for help, and say, they will repent, and mend their lives; but as soon as God has taken away the trouble from them, they are too apt to forget Him, and their promise too, and run into their old courses.

At last, God sent out a destroying angel, and he slew the first-born of every family in *Egypt*; and there was a great cry, for there was not a house where there was not one dead. But the children of the *Israelites* were not hurt. *Pharaoh* now felt the power of God very sensibly, and, not knowing what might be the end of his anger, he called *Moses* and *Aaron*, and told them to get the *Israelites* together, and their flocks and herds, and go out of his kingdom. And the *Egyptians* were so affected with the plagues which God had sent, and so desirous that the *Israelites* should go, that they let them have raiment, and gold, and silver, and jewels, and whatever they.

Of the Plagues of EGYPT. 41

they asked for. And God commanded, that that day should be a feast among them for ever, and be called, *The PASSOVER*, because, when he slew the first-born in every house in *Egypt*, he passed over the houses of the *Israelites*, and because he brought them out of that oppressive country.

After they had gone some days journey, *Pharaoh*, being informed that they intended to leave his country, collected some forces, and pursued them with the utmost expedition. He overtook them near the *Red Sea*; and when the *Israelites* saw the king, with a great army, behind them, and the *Red Sea* before them, they were filled with fear, and murmured against *Moses*. But *Moses*, at the command of God, struck the sea with his wand, and immediately the waters were divided, and were as a wall on the right hand and on the left, so that there was a dry path for them, and they walked with safety to the other shore. The *Egyptians* went after them into the midst of the sea, and the waters rushed violently upon them, and they were all drowned.

When the *Israelites* saw this, they praised God; and *Moses* made a fine psalm, or hymn, of thanksgiving. They all joined in singing it, and were very joyful.

CHAP.



C H A P. XIII.

The Wandering in the Desert.

NOTWITHSTANDING the *Israelites* had poured forth their thanks to God in this manner, they soon forgot their great deliverance, and, within a few days, began to upbraid their leader for having brought them out of *Egypt*. They were obliged to go through a long wilderness, in order to get to the land, in which God intended to settle them: and here, whenever they were in want of provision or water, or under any difficulty, they blamed and reproached *Moses*; and, instead of putting their trust in God, and bearing trials and difficulties with patience, they murmured against Him. God, however, gave them many signs of his power and goodness, by giving them food from heaven, causing great quantities of quails to fall among them, and sending them a sort of grain, called *Manna*, which made sweet cakes, and served them instead of bread; and, at *Rephidim*, he commanded *Moses* to strike a rock with his wand, and water immediately flowed out of it.

About

About three months after they had left *Egypt*, God commanded *Moses* to call the people to *Mount Sinai*; and when they were gathered together, a loud trumpet sounded, and there were flashes of fire, and claps of thunder, and the mountain itself trembled. And God spoke from the midst of the fire, and pronounced the ten commandments, and afterwards gave them to *Moses*, written upon two tables of stone, that he might teach them to the people.

The first teaches, That we are not to acknowledge any more gods than *One*.

The second forbids the sin of idolatry; the making any picture, or image, as an object of worship.

The third commands us to honour and reverence the holy name of God, and not to use it in a rash manner, or on trifling occasions.

The fourth teaches us, to keep holy the *Sabbath Day*, by resting from all labour, by going to church, and reading the *Bible* and good books.

The fifth, That we should honour and obey our parents, and all that have a lawful authority over us.

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The sixth, That we should not take away the life of any person, nor do any hurt or violence to others.

The seventh, That we should keep ourselves in temperance, soberness, and chastity.

The eighth, That we should not cheat, or steal, or, by any unjust means, take away what belongs to another.

The ninth, That we should not speak evil of others, and never tell a lie upon any account.

The tenth, That we should be contented with what God gives us, and not covet or desire to have what he has given to others, without their consent.

Moses was forty days and forty nights on the top of *Mount Sinai*, learning these and many more wise and good things from God. But, in the mean time, the people grew tired of waiting for him; and, at length, supposing him to be lost, they desired *Aaron*, the brother of *Moses*, to make a God for them, that they might worship it. *Aaron* was grieved at such a wicked request, and yet had not courage to refuse them. Therefore he took the gold and silver, which the *Egyptians* had given them, and, having melted it, made
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an image of it, in the shape of a calf, and many of them worshipped it, like their neighbours the heathens, whom God had resolved to destroy for their idolatry. While they were so doing, *Moses* came down from the mountain; and, when he saw the calf, and the people singing and dancing about it, he was very angry. He took the image, and burnt it in the fire, and afterwards ordered many of them, who had been guilty of this sin of idolatry, to be slain.

The people, however, offended God again and again, with their stubbornness and murmurings, till He declared to *Moses*, That He would punish them, by making them wander from place to place, in the wilderness, for forty years; and that none of the people, from twenty years old and upwards, except *Joshua* and *Caleb*, should go into the land of *Canaan*, to which He was leading them; the land flowing with milk and honey, and abounding with all good things. God was pleased also to punish several of them, for the sins they were guilty of.

There was a sacred fire in the *Tabernacle* (the place of Divine Worship) which was always preserved; in order to burn the sacrifice, the lamb, or sheep, or goat, or whatever

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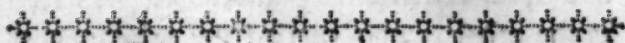
ever was offered to the Lord : but *Nadab* and *Alihu* brought common fire into the *Tabernacle*, to burn the sacrifice ; and therefore God struck them dead with lightening.

One was stoned to death for breaking the *Sabbath* ; and another underwent the same punishment, for blaspheming God, and taking his name in vain.

Korah, and many other wicked persons, murmured against *Moses* and *Aaron*, and upbraided them for taking so much power to themselves, as if they had not done it by the will of God. But God shewed himself in favour of *Moses*, and destroyed the offenders : for the earth opened under them, and they, and all that belonged to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them.

At length, *Moses*, finding the time of his death approaching, spoke very tenderly to the people, and advised them to be faithful and obedient to God, who would then give them blessings of every kind. After which he went to the top of *Mount Pisgah*, and, having taken a view of the country of *Canaan*, which God had promised to *Abraham's* posterity, he there resigned his soul into the hands of angels, who carried it to Heaven.

C H A P.



C H A P. XIV.

The History of JOSHUA.

JOSHUA, the son of *Nun*, by the command of God, succeeded *Moses*, in the government of the children of *Israel*, and undertook to lead them into the promised land, defend them against their enemies, and teach them their duty to their Maker. God exhorted him to be strong, and of good courage, in this great undertaking: and promised to assist him, and to be with him, as he had been with *Moses*: *As I was with Moses, says He, so will I be with thee; I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*

Joshua commanded the army to decamp, and marched with all the people to the river *Jordan*, which ran between them and *Canaan*, the promised land. He then ordered the priests to bear the ark, and, when they reached the middle of the river, to stand still. The ark was a small chest, or coffer, in which the two tables of the law were carefully kept, and which was never produced,
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48 *The History of* JOSHUA.

but upon extraordinary occasions. As soon as the priests, who carried the ark, touched the river, behold, to the great amazement of all the people, the waters divided, as at the red sea, and the people passed over on dry ground. And afterwards, upon their coming out with the ark, the waters immediately returned to their place.

Jericho was the first city in the land of *Canaan*, and stood near the place where they had passed the river. *Joshua* therefore laid siege to it; but God was pleased to shew his own power in a wonderful manner in the taking of it. He directed *Joshua* to lead the army, with the priests and the ark, round the town seven days together, blowing trumpets every time: and this being done, on the seventh day the walls of the city fell flat to the ground; so that the *Israelites* marched in without any difficulty, and took possession of the place. The people, to whom it belonged, were such wicked idolaters, that, at the command of God, the children of *Israel* destroyed them all, except *Rahab* and her family, who had behaved civilly to some men, whom *Joshua* had sent privately to get an account of the place and people. They therefore took great care of her, and all that be-
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longed

longed to her. Indeed what good man ever forgets those who have been good to him?

Then *Joshua* took the city *Ai*, and destroyed it; upon which the kings of that neighbourhood, alarmed at his success, joined their forces together: but *Joshua* came suddenly upon their army, and put it to flight; and he took the kings and slew them. While the enemy was endeavouring to escape by flight, the Lord caused a heavy storm of hail to fall upon them, which destroyed more than the *Israelites* slew with the sword. Upon this occasion, at the word of *Joshua*, the sun and moon stood still; for God was pleased to lengthen the day, that *Joshua* might pursue his enemies, and gain a complete victory over them.

Afterwards several other kings joined their forces together, and pitched their tents at the waters of *Merom*; but the Lord delivered them into the hands of *Joshua*, who slew them, and destroyed their cities, and gave the spoil of them to the people.

And *Joshua* went on with astonishing success, till he had subdued almost all the land of *Canaan*: for the Lord God fought for *Israel*. Now therefore he resolved to divide the country among the people; and having

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taken an exact survey of it, and divided it into equal parts, each tribe had a possession of it according to lot, except the tribe of *Levi*, which had no portion of land; for God appointed another provision for them, because He had chosen them to be his ministers and priests, to perform the rites of divine worship, and offer sacrifice at his altar.

When the land was divided among the *Israelites*, they set up the tabernacle of the congregation at *Shiloh*, and the Lord gave them rest round about. And after some time, *Joshua* being grown old, and perceiving that his death approached, called the elders and the people together; and having tenderly reminded them of the manifold blessings which God had bestowed upon them and their fathers, he exhorted them, with the utmost earnestness, to love the Lord, and to enter into a solemn covenant, That they would serve Him in sincerity and truth. And the people said unto *Joshua*, *The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.*



C H A P. XV.

The Book of JUDGES.

AFTER the death of *Joshua*, the *Israelites* remained some time without any Judge, and, being like sheep without a shepherd, very often went astray. Instead of obeying the laws of God, which had been so often inculcated, and so wonderfully enforced upon them, they chose to follow the inclinations of their own hearts, and provoked him to anger by their wickedness.

The people of *Gibeah*, of the tribe of *Benjamin*, had been guilty of a most barbarous action to one of the *Levites*, at which all the other tribes were so angry, that they demanded the offenders, in order to punish them for it. But the rest of the *Benjamites*, instead of giving up their wicked relations to justice, protected them. This brought on a very bloody war, in which the tribe of *Benjamin* was almost totally destroyed. Afterwards, however, the other tribes were grieved for having punished them so severely, and were reconciled to them that remained.

The *Israelites* were not only guilty of scandalous immoralities, but, by dwelling among the heathens, they fell into their profane customs; and, forgetting the Lord God, who had done such great things for them, they served the gods of those countries, called *Baalim*. Their example should teach us always to avoid the company of bad people, lest we should imitate their bad conduct. The consequence of their impiety was, that their neighbours, the *Syrians*, became stronger than they, and oppressed them, till they repented, and cried to God for help; and then he appointed *Othniel* to be their Judge, who fought their battles, and delivered them from their enemies. After his death they fell again into idolatry, and then God delivered them into the hands of the *Moabites*; but when they repented, *Ehud* was made Judge of *Israel*, and under him they prospered. The next Judge was *Shamgar*; and after him, a wise woman, named *Deborah* the prophetess, and *Barak* a valiant man, governed *Israel* together. They gained a great victory over the *Canaanites*, by which means the *Israelites* were delivered from very great distress; and *Deborah*, the prophetess, made a fine hymn or psalm of thanksgiving, mag-

magnifying the deliverance, and praising God for his goodness.

After the death of *Deborah*, the *Israelites* fell again into idolatry, and God permitted the *Midianites*, and other nations, to oppress them for seven years; but when they humbled themselves, and cried to Him for relief, he sent his angel to *Gideon*, who was threshing wheat in a barn, and made him Judge: and *Gideon*, through God's assistance, performed many great and glorious actions, and freed them from their enemies.

When he died, one of his sons, called *Abimelech*, having slain all his brethren, except *Jotham* the youngest, reigned over *Israel*. This occasioned great disturbances among the people; but after three years, as he was besieging a city, a woman threw a piece of a mill-stone upon his head, which fractured his skull and killed him.

Tola succeeded to the government, and after him *Jair*, in whose time the *Israelites* again provoked God by their sins, and worshipping *Baalim*: therefore he sent the *Philistines* and *Ammonites* against them, and made them feel the weight of his anger. Upon this the people grew sensible of their folly and impiety, and repented: and then God raised up *Jeph-*

thab to be Judge. He was a great warrior ; but one act of rashness sullied his glory, and made the remainder of his life unhappy : for, as he was going out to fight the *Ammonites*, he vowed, that, if God gave him the victory, he would sacrifice the first thing he met when he returned home. He did conquer the *Ammonites* ; but, alas ! the first thing he met upon his return was his only daughter, who, not having heard of his vow, and being impatient to see her father again, ran out first to embrace him ; and, to his great grief, he thought himself obliged to sacrifice her according to his vow.

It is a question, indeed, whether the daughter of *Jephthah* was sacrificed or not ; for the words of the vow may be so interpreted, as not to require or intend it ; and, according to this favourable construction of the passage, she was only *to be the Lord's*, that is, to be devoted to a single life, and to spend all her days in the service and worship of God.

It is very foolish and sinful to make vows to God, as *Jephthah* did ; that is, to take an oath, that if God will do such a thing for *us*, we will do such a thing for *Him*. He is not to be bargained with like a man. Indeed we should be cautious of making vows to one another, and consider calmly before we enter
into

into any solemn engagements: a rash vow is always a mark of folly, and generally brings sorrow and misery, as it did to *Jephthah*.

When he died, *Ibzan* was Judge in his place. *Ibzan* was succeeded by *Elon*, and *Elon* by *Abdon*. When *Abdon* died the *Philistines* oppressed *Israel* very much, till *Samson* was sent by the Almighty to deliver them. He was endowed with such extraordinary strength, that he killed a lion with as much ease as if it had been a lamb. He destroyed many of the *Philistines*: he slew a thousand of them with only the jaw-bone of an ass; and being inclosed in one of their cities, carried away the gates of the city, with the posts and bars, upon his shoulders, and made his escape. But afterwards he put himself into the power of a wicked and deceitful woman, called *Dalilah*. The *Philistines* promised her a large sum of money, if she would find out the cause of his strength, and deliver him into their hands. She tried by several means to draw the fatal secret from him; but could not, for some time, prevail on him to discover it. At last, however, he was so indiscreet as to tell her, that his strength consisted in his hair, and that he could not be conquered while that was upon his head; but that, as soon as it was shaved off, he should become

like another man. Soon after this, while he was sleeping, she cut off his hair, and the *Philistines* came in, and, having bound him, carried him to prison, where they put out his eyes, and made him labour at a mill.

Some time after, the *Philistines* made a great feast to their idol *Dagon*, for having taken *Samson*; and, when they were in the midst of their mirth and jollity, they sent for him to laugh at him and mock him. But the time was come, when it pleased God to deliver his people from such cruel enemies; for *Samson's* hair was grown again, and with it his strength returned: and, when they had made sport with him, he called upon God to help him; and, taking hold of the pillars which supported the building, he shook them so powerfully, that the house fell, and crushed them all to death.

After this the *Israelites* were quiet for several years, and *Eli*, the High Priest, became Judge of *Israel*. He was a well-disposed man, but was too indulgent to his children. His two sons, *Hophni* and *Phineas*, were guilty of great immoralities; and, instead of reproving and chastising them for their crimes, he spoke to them with such mildness as rather encouraged them in their wickedness. The wickedness of the sons, and the remiss-
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ness of the father, very much offended God, who therefore threatened to destroy his sons, and remove the priesthood from his family. *Hophni* and *Phineas* were soon after killed in battle by the *Philistines*, who over-ran all the country, and took away the ark of the Lord. And when old *Eli* heard the news, not only the death of his sons, but also that the holy ark was taken away, he fell down and died.

Samuel, who had been dedicated to the Lord in a remarkable manner, had been bred up under *Eli* from his infancy. He was a pious and virtuous youth, and God was pleased to reveal his will frequently to him, so that he became a great prophet. He succeeded *Eli*, and he preached to the people, and taught them their duty. He prevailed on them to confess their sins, and humble themselves before the Lord; and, for some time, they enjoyed peace and quietness. But when *Samuel* was grown old and incapable of administering affairs, his sons perverted judgment, and oppressed the people; upon which the *Israelites* laid their complaints before him, and demanded to have their form of government altered, and to have a king, as there was in other nations.

The Lord was displeased with their importunate solicitations, and ordered *Samuel* to acquaint them with the inconveniences and hardships of a kingly state; but, upon their continuing obstinate in their demand, He told *Samuel* to hearken to their voice, and make them a king.

God is pleased sometimes to punish our folly, by granting our requests; and thereby teaches us, not to offer up to Him every idle and impertinent wish which arises in the heart, but to apply for those things only, which He has commanded us to ask, and which will prove real blessings to us.

Samuel, according to the direction of God, anointed a young man, called *Saul*, of the tribe of *Benjamin*, to be King. But *Samuel* still had great power, and was much regarded to the end of his life, because the people knew he was a good man, and a great prophet.

* The names of the Judges, after the death of *Joshua*, were *Othniel*, *Ehud*, *-Shamgar*, *Deborah* and *Barak*, *Gideon*, *Abimelech*, *Tola*, *Jair*, *Jephtha*, *Ibzan*, *Elon*, *Abdon*, *Samsen*, *Eli*, and *Samuel*.



C H A P. XVI.

The Reign of King SAUL.

SAUL had not been long upon the throne, when the men of *Jabesh-Gilead*, being besieged by the *Ammonites*, applied to him for his assistance; upon which he immediately raised an army, put himself at the head of it, and falling upon the enemy early in the morning, made a great slaughter of them, and delivered the city.

After this he gained many great victories, and went on successfully, till, at last, growing proud and presumptuous, he refused to follow the advice of the prophet *Samuel*; and, by his disobedience, lost the favour of God. He that gave him his crown, resolved now to take it away, because he proved unworthy of it.

Indeed every blessing we enjoy is the gift of God, and depends upon his free-will: we should therefore study to secure his favour, by a proper use and improvement of the bless-

60 *The Reign of King SAUL.*

sings He has bestowed, and an uniform obedience to his will.

Some time after, *Saul* was very much troubled in mind (*there is no peace to the wicked*, says the *Scripture*) and he was advised, by the power of music, to divert his thoughts, and lull his mind to rest. For this purpose he sent for *David*, the son of *Jesse*, who was famous for playing well upon the harp. He came to the King, and his music was so excellent, and had such a happy effect upon the mind of *Saul*, through the mercy of God, as to drive away his melancholy thoughts, and, in a great measure, cure him of his disorder: upon which *David* returned to his father's house.

Soon after the *Philistines* made war upon the *Israelites*, and sent *Goliath*, a giant, to challenge any one of them to single combat. But he was so much taller and stronger than other men, that not one of *Saul's* soldiers dared to go out against him and fight him, tho' *Saul* promised his daughter in marriage to the man who should kill him. He appeared for several days together, calling and provoking them to battle, but they were all terrified at the sight of him. Young *David*, however, who had been sent to the camp
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with provision for his brethren (who were soldiers) as soon as he saw the giant, and heard his insolent language, resolved to go out and meet him: for he put his trust in the living God, who had formerly given him strength to slay both a lion and a bear; and he trusted would give him strength to slay the wicked *Philistine* also.

All the army of *Israel* wondered, and trembled for him; and when *Goliath* saw what a stripling he was, he supposed he had been sent to mock him; and he threatened to give his flesh to the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field. But *David* threw a stone, and struck him in the forehead with such force, that the stone sunk into his head, and he fell flat upon his face to the earth. Then *David* ran to him, and cut off his head: at the sight of which, the *Israelites* attacked the army of the *Philistines*, put them to flight, and pursued them with great slaughter.

David performed many other great exploits, and all the people admired him, and *Jonathan*, the son of *Saul*, loved him as his own soul. But as bad people are always jealous of those who are better liked than themselves, *Saul* hated *David*; and tho',
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62 *The Reign of King SAUL:*

under providence, he was the deliverer of him and his people, and was now become his son-in-law, he tried often to put him to death. *David*, therefore, was obliged to avoid his presence; and, hearing that *Saul* had resolved to destroy him, he quitted his dominions, and went to dwell at *Gath*, a city of the *Philistines*: from thence, upon being discovered, he fled to *Adullam*, and wandered about in desarts, and lodged in caves, while *Saul* was making continual inquiries and searches after him, in order to destroy him. In the mean time several persons, relations and friends, and men of broken fortunes, resorted to *David*, and he formed them into a little army.

Near the place, where *David* was, lived a rich man, named *Nabal*, who was brutal and churlish in his temper; and, when *David* applied to him for some provisions, he not only refused, but treated his servants rudely, and spoke reproachfully of *David* himself. *David*, therefore, threatened to destroy him, and his family: but *Abigail*, the wife of *Nabal*, hearing what had passed, took a great quantity of provisions, and with them, and some soft persuasive words, she appeased the indignation and wrath of *David*. And some
time

time after, upon the death of her husband *Nabal*, *David* married her.

As yet, however, he could not obtain any rest, and had no dwelling place; for *Saul*, as it were, hunted him upon the mountains, and pursued him whithersoever he went. It happened, one day, that he entered the very cave, in which *David* and two or three friends had concealed themselves. The companions of *David* advised him to embrace this opportunity of putting an end to all his distresses, by the death of his unjust persecutor; but *David* answered, *God forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed.*

A good man, instead of taking revenge, chuses always to return good for evil.

Saul could not but acknowledge the generosity and goodness of *David*, in having thus spared his life; and having intreated him not to destroy his family, when he should come to the crown, he returned home in peace. But his jealousy and anger soon revived; and, being informed that *David* was in the wilderness of *Ziph*, he went in pursuit of him. There *David* again had it in his power to take away the life of *Saul*, and set the crown upon his own head: but his piety prevailed
over

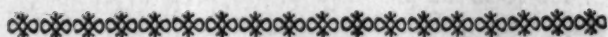
64 *The Reign of King SAUL.*

over his interest, and nothing could tempt him to stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed.

At length, however, finding it impossible to dwell in safety in the land of *Israel*, he retired to the country of the *Philistines*, where *Achish*, king of *Gath*, kindly received him, and gave him the city *Ziklag* for his residence.

Some time after, a war broke out between the *Israelites* and the *Philistines*; and when the forces drew near to each other, and *Saul* beheld the superior number of the enemy, his heart greatly trembled. He then inquired of the Lord what he should do; but the Lord had forsaken him, and made him no answer. His army was soon overcome by the enemy, and put to flight, and three of his sons were slain: upon which, oppressed with misery and despair, he fell upon his own sword, and killed himself.

David, with an unfeigned sorrow, lamented the death of *Saul*, because he had been his father-in-law, and his king: but he grieved most exceedingly for *Jonathan*, who had always behaved to him as an affectionate brother, and a sincere friend.



C H A P. XVII.

The Reign of King DAVID.

DAVID had been anointed King, some years ago, privately in his father's house, by *Samuel*, at the particular command of God. And now, upon the death of *Saul*, having removed from *Ziklag* to *Hebron*, he was acknowledged King by the tribe of *Judah*: but *Ishbosheth*, the son of *Saul*, was proclaimed king by *Abner*, and acknowledged by the other tribes. This occasioned a civil war, which continued several years, till the death of *Ishbosheth*, who was slain by two *Benjamites*, who were of his household: upon which all the tribes of *Israel* came to *Hebron*, and anointed *David* their King.

He was fully sensible of the providence of God, which had raised him from the sheepfold, and brought him through so many troubles and afflictions to the throne of *Israel*; and therefore expressed a sincere love to God and his worship, and discharged the duties of his high office in such a manner, that all his subjects were happy under him.

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66 *The Reign of King DAVID.*

As soon as he was established in his kingdom, he went in triumph, with a great number of his subjects, and brought the ark of the Lord to *Jerusalem*. He also had a strong desire to build a magnificent temple to the most High God, for his service and worship; but the Lord was pleased to forbid the work, by his prophet *Nathan*, assuring him, however, that he approved of his intention, and that it should be executed in the reign of *Solomon*, his son. He then applied himself to the conquest of his enemies: he took the city of *Gath*; he subdued the *Moabites*; put to flight great armies of the *Syrians*, and slew many thousands of them. By these victories he gained many spoils and great riches, vessels of gold, and silver, and brass; all which he dedicated to the Lord, and laid up for the use of the temple, which his son was to build after him. And the Lord *preserved him whithersoever he went*, and gave him every blessing he could wish for.

Who would have thought that such a wise and good prince could ever have done wrong? but the foolish pleasures of the world got possession of his heart, and hurried him into a course of licentiousness and wickedness.

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Whoever is forgetful of his Creator, and indulges vicious desires, will soon be prevailed on to gratify his inordinate passion; and, by degrees, will become an habitual worker of iniquity. This was the case of *David*. When he neglected studying to please God, and praying to Him for his help, wicked thoughts came into his heart, and he gave way to them, and fell into the greatest sins: but God took pity on him, and sent the prophet *Nathan* to reprove him for his crimes, and laid many afflictions upon him, with a kind intention to bring him to repentance, that he might be happy hereafter. His family fell into wickedness and dissensions; and *Abalom*, one of his sons, whom he loved very much, took up arms against him, and drove him out of *Jerusalem*: but, at length, the army of *Abalom* was destroyed, and the young man himself lost his life.

The sins of *David* were indeed very great, and his sorrow for them was also great: he lamented them with deep contrition of heart, and turned to the Lord; and the Lord forgave him upon his repentance, and blessed him again.

At last, finding that the time of his death drew near, he gave his last advice to his son

Solo-

68 *The Reign of King DAVID.*

Solomon; and, particularly, charged him to observe the will of the Lord his God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, that he might prosper, and be blessed in all that he took in hand.

We may judge of the piety and devotion of *David*, from his *Psalms*. We have one hundred and fifty in the *Bible*; the greatest part of which were written by this good King. Some were composed when he was penitent for sins, and imploring God's forgiveness; and some are thanksgivings for mercies received. Some describe the goodness, and greatness, and many wonderful works, of the Almighty Creator; and others are filled with prophecies of what was to come to pass in future time.

They are divided into proper parts, that they may be read over in the morning and evening service of the church: and it is also expedient to select such as are applicable to our own temper and state of mind for our private use. But let us always read them with thought and attention; for the heart must go along with the words, both in reading and praying; otherwise what we do, instead of being pleasing to God, will be offensive to Him.

C H A P.



C H A P. XVIII.

The Reign of King SOLOMON.

SOLOMON succeeded his father *David* in the throne of *Israel*. And soon after he was happily settled, God appeared to him, in a dream, and offered to give him whatever he should chuse. *Solomon*, instead of asking for long life, or riches, or honour, which so much engage the attention and labours of mankind, asked only for wisdom: for he considered that he was king over a great and numerous people, and that the exercise of sovereign power and extensive justice required an extraordinary share of prudence and wisdom. The Lord was so pleased with his moderation and good choice, that he not only granted him a wise and understanding heart, but also riches and honours in abundance.

After some time, having added a vast quantity of materials to those which *David* had collected, he applied himself to the building of the temple. It was the most beautiful and magnificent edifice in the world. The grandeur and richness of it are thought
to

70 *The Reign of King SOLOMON.*

to have exceeded all description. When it was finished, he made a solemn dedication of it to the Lord; and, kneeling down in the temple, prayed earnestly, that God would favourably hear the supplications of his people, which they should offer up in that holy place, and accordingly avert the evils they feared, and grant them the blessings they desired.

The fame of the wisdom and magnificence of *Solomon* was spread through all the earth, and drew persons from the most distant nations to his court; and, particularly the queen of *Sheba* came from the farthest part of the south, to see his glory, and be an ear-witness of his wisdom.

Yet even this great and wise man went astray, and disobeyed God. From the love of wisdom he degenerated to the love of women and idolatry. He took wives from among the nations, with which God had commanded the children of *Israel* not to make any alliance. These soon corrupted his heart, and drew him from the service of the true God; so that he built temples for idols, and worshipped their gods and goddesses: going after *Astarteth*, the goddess of the *Zidonians*, and after *Milcom*, the abomination of the

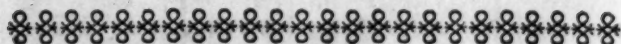
the

The Reign of King SOLOMON. 71

the *Ammonites*. Thus the glory, he had obtained by his wisdom and virtue, was sullied and defaced; and the Lord expressed his indignation and anger, by raising up several enemies against him; and by foretelling, that he would take the kingdom from his family, and give it unto his servant, except a certain portion of it, which he would give to his son, for his servant *David's* sake.

It has been generally agreed, that the book of *Proverbs*, the book of *Ecclesiastes*, or the *Preacher*, and the *Song of Solomon*, were written by this prince. The last seems to be a figurative or typical composition; but the two first are full of excellent maxims and rules, very profitable for the conduct of life in all stations and circumstances. The book of *Ecclesiastes*, in particular, is a penitential confession of his own folly, in having given himself up to worldly pleasures, and is a serious admonition to those who now walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes; for he, who gratified every sensual desire, and withheld not his heart from any joy, hath assured us, *That all is vanity and vexation of spirit; and that to fear God, and to keep his commandments, is the duty and the happiness of man.*

C H A P.



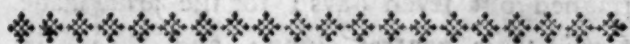
C H A P. XIX.

The Division of the Kingdom under
R E H O B O A M.

AS soon as *Solomon* was dead, his son *Rehoboam* was seated on his throne. But the whole congregation of *Israel*, being assembled on the occasion, desired him to mitigate some taxes, and remove some heavy burdens, which had been laid upon them by his father. The old men, who were experienced in the affairs of the nation, advised him to give a kind and gentle answer, in order to gain their affections; but, being encouraged by his young and foolish companions, he behaved to his subjects with great pride and severity; and, instead of lessening, threatened to add to their grievances, and make their yoke heavier; upon which ten tribes revolted from him, and made *Jeroboam*, the son of *Nebat*, king over them. Only two of the tribes, the tribe of *Judah*, and that of *Benjamin*, continued with *Rehoboam*; and neither he, nor his sons, were able to regain the rest.

Thus

Thus this kingdom, which was just rising into fame, was divided into two parts, which bore different names, the kingdom of *Judah*, and the kingdom of *Israel*; *Rehoboam* remained king of *Judah*, and *Jeroboam* was called king of *Israel*: and thus God was pleased to punish the sins of *Solomon*, by the folly of *Rehoboam*; and to manifest to the world, that He is the ruler of kings, and turneth their hearts whithersoever he pleaseth, according as they are subjects of his mercy, or of his indignation.



C H A P. XX.

Of the Kings of ISRAEL.

JEROBOAM, fearing that the people, if they went to do sacrifice at *Jerusalem*, according to the law, might be prevailed on to turn again to *Rehoboam*, set up two golden calves, as objects of worship, in different parts of his kingdom. He also took upon himself the office of burning incense before his idols, and appointed any of the lowest of the people to be priests of the high places. By this public institution of idolatry he corrupted the minds of the peo-

ple, and opened a door to every kind of impiety and wickedness.

Nadab, his son, succeeded him, who walked in the steps of his father: but his reign was short; for, in less than two years, *Baasha* conspired against him, and slew him; and, in order to secure the kingdom to himself, put all the family of *Jeroboam* to death.

Baasha, after many years of iniquity, was succeeded by his son *Elah*, who, in the second year of his reign, was killed by *Zimri*, a captain of his chariots. *Zimri*, however, reigned but seven days; for the army made *Omri*, their general, king; and *Zimri*, in despair, set fire to the palace, and was destroyed with it.

Omri built a new palace, and a city, called *Samaria*, the chief city in *Israel*, as *Jerusalem* was the chief city of the kingdom of *Judah*. He not only walked in the ways of *Jeroboam*, who made *Israel* to sin, but is said in *Scripture* to have done worse than all who were before him.

Ahab, his son, reigned after him, who followed the example of his father, and seems not to have fallen short of it. He married *Jezebel*, the daughter of *Ethbaal*, king of the *Sidonians*, a proud and cruel woman. He
built

built an altar to *Baal* in *Samaria*, and made a grove for a superstitious and impure worship. In his time lived *Elijah*, a great prophet, who was fed for some time by ravens, near the brook *Cberith*: he raised to life a widow's son at *Zarephath*, and blessed her barrel of meal, and her cruise of oil, so that they failed not in the time of distress. Afterwards, having reproved *Ahab* for his idolatry, and given full proof that the priests and prophets of *Baal* were impostors, and that *his God was the true God*, he commanded the people to seize the priests, and slew them at the brook *Kishon*. He also brought down fire from heaven to consume two captains, and their attendants, who were sent by *Ahaziah* to apprehend him, for their presumptuous insolence and derision of him; but shewed mercy to the third captain, who paid him due respect, and intreated his favour, and went with him to the king. He was sometime after taken up from earth, and carried by a whirlwind into heaven, and his spirit of prophecy rested upon *Elisha*, who was present, and saw him thus taken up.

Ahab, however, persisted in his impiety, and soon after, to gratify his covetous desire, caused the death of *Naboth*, an innocent

neighbour, and seized his vineyard. At length he was slain in battle by a Syrian, and was succeeded by his son *Abaziah*, a weak and inglorious prince. He died by a fall from his upper-chamber, and *Jehoram*, his brother (for he had no son) reigned in his stead. He made some reformation in the kingdom, and having procured the friendship and assistance of *Jehoshaphat*, king of *Judah*, overthrew the *Moabites*, who had rebelled against *Israel*.

The prophet *Elisha*, about this time, performed several miracles; as healing the waters at *Jericho*, supplying the army with water, increasing a poor woman's oil, for the payment of her creditors; giving a son to the charitable *Shunamite*, and afterwards, when he was dead, restoring him to life; healing *Naaman* of his leprosy, and fixing it upon his own servant *Gehazi*, for his falsehood and covetousness; and causing iron to swim. He also smote the army of the *Syrians* with blindness; and afterwards, when *Benbadad* had besieged *Samaria*, and reduced the city to the utmost famine and distress, the Lord spread a dreadful terror through his camp in the night, so that the army fled with all the expedition they could into their own country;

country ; by which means the people were supplied with an incredible plenty, according to the prediction of *Elisha*.

Jehu, the general of the *Israelites*, was raised up by the Almighty to be an avenger of the crimes of the house of *Ahab* ; and having been anointed king by a prophet for that purpose, he slew *Jehoram*, and caused *Jezebel* to be thrown from a window, whose body was devoured by dogs, according to a prophecy of *Elijah*. He proceeded to cut off all the family of *Ahab*, and afterwards destroyed the priests of *Baal* and his temple ; but he continued the old idolatry of the calves, which *Jeroboam* had established.

Jehoahaz, his son, was the next king : he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and therefore his power was very much reduced by the kings of *Syria*. After a troublesome reign, he was succeeded by his son *Joash* ; and *Joash* by his son *Jeroboam*, who, by great successes in war, relieved his people from their enemies, and much enlarged his kingdom.

Zechariah, his son, succeeded him, and, after a short and wicked reign, was slain by *Shallum*, who usurped the throne ; and, after one month, he was slain by *Menahem*,
gene-

78 *The Captivity of the* ISRAELITES.

general of the army. *Menahem* left the kingdom to his son *Pekabiah*, who, after two years, was murdered in his palace by *Pekah*, his general, who seized the crown, and was murdered in his turn by *Hoshea*, who was the last king of *Israel*.



C H A P. XXI.

The Captivity of the ISRAELITES.

THE Almighty Creator had patiently endured the idolatry and sins of the *Israelites* for a long course of years, and had earnestly called them by several messengers to repentance. He had also frequently oppressed and afflicted them by private calamities and domestic troubles, as well as by their foreign enemies, in order to bring them to a sense of their impieties, and amendment of heart and life. But, at last, when they were hardened in sin and idolatry, and grew worse and worse, he resolved to bring them into greater distresses, by destroying their kingdom, and scattering them among all people.

Accordingly, in the reign of *Hoshea*, the king of *Assyria* invaded the country; besieged

sieged *Samaria* for three years, and, having taken it, quite destroyed it. He shut up *Hoshea* in prison, and carried the people captives into *Assyria*, and *placed them in the cities of the *Medes*. He sent also a great number of the *Assyrians* to dwell in *Samaria*, and the country round about, that they might enjoy the land of the *Israelites*, and keep the rest of the people in subjection. And thus this kingdom, after it had continued near two hundred and sixty years, was destroyed, and the people scattered, according to what the prophet *Hosea* had foretold, *God shall cast them away, because they did not hearken unto Him, and they shall be wanderers among the nations.*



C H A P. XXII.

Of the Kings of JUDAH.

REHOBAM having fortified some towns, and built some strong places, raised a very large army, in order to war against the ten tribes of *Israel*, and bring them back to their allegiance; but he was prevented by the prophet *Shemaiah* from go-

80 *Of the Kings of JUDAH.*

ing against them. The people became very impious and wicked in his reign, and therefore God sent the *Egyptians* against them, who entered *Jerusalem*, and plundered the temple. He left the state much diminished to his son *Abijah*, who waged war with *Jeroboam*, and recovered several towns from him.

He was succeeded by his son *Asa*, who destroyed the groves and images, and encouraged the worship of the true God.

After him *Jehoshaphat*, his son, reigned: he fortified his towns, raised a very numerous force, and assisted *Ahab* against his enemies. A prophet reprov'd him for having assisted that wicked prince, and he endeavoured to repair the fault, by destroying the high places and groves, which were applied to idolatrous and superstitious uses; and by settling affairs both in church and state. He left the crown to his son *Jehoram*, who very much degenerated from his father, and married *Athaliah*, the daughter of *Omri*, and sister of wicked *Ahab*. Impiety and iniquity never prosper long. The *Philistines* and *Arabians* came suddenly upon him, and carried away all his wives and sons, except his youngest son *Ahaziah*, who succeeded him. *Ahaziah* was governed

verned by the advice and direction of his mother, but was soon cut off by *Jehu*, whom God raised up to be the punishment and ruin of *Ahab's* house.

Upon his death, *Athaliah*, his mother, usurped the kingdom; and, that she might possess it without opposition, she endeavoured to destroy all the children of *Ahaziah*. But *Jehoash*, an infant, was secretly conveyed away, and secured from her cruelty; and, after a few years, she was slain, and *Jehoash* placed upon the throne. The beginning of his reign was flourishing and happy under the administration of his uncle *Jehoiadab*; but, after his death, he gave way to flatterers and evil counsellors. He was conquered by the *Syrians*, vexed with sore diseases, and treacherously slain by his own servants.

Amaziah, his son, succeeded him. He overcame the *Moabites*, and treated them with great cruelty; but was afterwards taken captive by the king of *Israel*, and at last killed by a conspiracy among his subjects.

Uzziah, who is also called *Azariah*, his son, reigned next. He repaired and fortified *Jerusalem*, and made many warlike instruments and engines. He was also a great encourager of husbandry, planting vines and feeding many cattle. But

82 *Of the Kings of JUDAH.*

prosperity corrupted his heart; and, in his pride, he usurped the priest's office, and went into the temple to burn incense, but was struck with leprosy, and rendered incapable of conducting publick affairs.

Jotham, his son, a wise and good prince, reigned after him; and he was succeeded by his wicked son *Abaz*, who introduced the idolatry of the kings of *Israel*, and, after the abomination of the heathen, sacrificed in the valley of the sons of *Hinnom*, and made his children pass through the fire to *Moloch*. The *Syrians* fought against him, and carried many of his subjects to *Damascus*; and *Pekah*, king of *Israel*, overthrew his army, and entered *Jerusalem*, from whence he took many valuable spoils.

Hezekiah, his son, ascended the throne after him. He reformed several abuses in divine worship, and restored the celebration of the *Passover*: and God was pleased to shew him signal favour, by miraculously destroying the *Assyrians*, who had besieged *Jerusalem*, and by adding, upon his prayer, fifteen years to his life. After a series of good actions, he left the kingdom to his son *Manasseh*, who degenerated from his father's good example, and restored idolatry: for which God suffered him

Of the Kings of JUDAH. 83

him to be carried captive to *Babylon*; but, upon his sincere humiliation and repentance, he was raised again to his kingdom, and reigned many years with remarkable piety.

Ammen, his son, succeeded, who pursued a course of immorality and profaneness, till he was slain by his servants. He was followed by his son, the pious *Josiah*. He broke the idolatrous altars, cut down the groves, repaired the temple, and caused the book of the law of *Moses* to be read publicly and distinctly to the people. He was slain in battle with the *Egyptians*, and succeeded by *Jehoa-haz*, who, after three months, was carried captive into *Egypt*.

Jehoiachim, his brother, an evil prince, reigned in his stead; and he was succeeded by his son *Jehoiachin*, who walking in the steps of his father, provoked the Lord to anger. He was carried prisoner to *Babylon*, with his mother, and many others, by *Nebuchadnezzar*, who took away also the treasures of the palace, and the riches of the temple. *Zedekiah*, uncle to *Jehoiachin*, was then made king by *Nebuchadnezzar*; but he soon after rebelled against him, and brought destruction upon himself and his country.

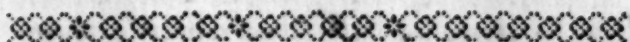


C H A P. XXIII.

The Captivity of the two Tribes.

THE goodness of God did not fail, during this succession of the kings of *Judah*, to call the people to repentance, and to the pure service and worship of Himself: for which purpose he sent several prophets, who, by serious and earnest exhortations, warned them of their danger, and expressly declared, that God would utterly destroy them, if they persisted in their wickedness. But the innovations introduced into their religious service, and the depravation of their manners, were so general, and so rooted in their hearts, that they despised the prophets, and paid little regard to their warnings and admonitions. They were, indeed, sometimes roused out of their lethargy, when they heard the judgments which were denounced against them, and felt deeply the divine displeasure. And the good kings, in some degree, reclaimed them from their errors, by destroying their images and groves, and encouraging the true worship of God. But they soon fell
back

back again into their former crimes, by the corruption of their own hearts, and the example of their other kings: nor did even the fatal end of the kingdom of *Israel* work an effectual reformation in that of *Judah*; They went on obstinately in their idolatry and sins, till, at length, God brought upon them the destruction which had been often foretold. And, in the reign of *Zedekiah*, king of *Judah*, that kingdom also, after it had continued near four hundred years, was over-run by the *Assyrians*, who plundered the sacred temple of the great God, set fire to that and to the city, and carried away the king and people to *Babylon*.



C H A P. XXIV.

*The Return of the Captives, and Restoration
of the TEMPLE.*

THE *Jews* continued in the land of their captivity about seventy years, according to the prophecy of *Daniel*. At the end of which time, God put it into the mind of *Cyrus*, king of *Persia* and *Babylon*, to give free liberty to the *Jews* to re-
turn

turn into their own country. A considerable number made use of this liberty; and, under the conduct of *Zerubbabel*, returned to *Judea*, where they applied themselves, with much zeal, to the rebuilding of the temple, and laid the foundation of it with great joy; while the ancient fathers, who had seen the temple which *Solomon* built, wept aloud at the remembrance, lamenting that the glory of the latter would fall so far short of the former.

After many years, *Ezra*, who was a man of great learning and goodness, obtained leave from king *Ahasuerus* to go, with many *Jews*, to *Jerusalem*. He was authorised to reform the church, and regulate the affairs of the nation; and he executed the task with great care and diligence.

Among other things, having been informed, that the people had not separated themselves from the heathens, but had taken wives from them, contrary to the will of God, he fasted and prayed for them: he then called them together, set their sin before them, and exhorted them earnestly to put their strange wives away, and, accordingly, a perfect reformation was made in this respect.

Some

and Restoration of the TEMPLE. 87

Some time after, *Nehemiah*, who was cup-bearer to *Ahasuerus*, having heard that *Jerusalem* was in a ruinous condition, and the inhabitants in great affliction; intreated the king, that he might be permitted to go thither and repair the city. The king not only consented, but also gave him proper powers for the accomplishment of his purpose.

When he arrived at *Jerusalem*, he encouraged the people to undertake the work; and, notwithstanding the opposition of their enemies, and the difficulties they had to encounter, they rebuilt the walls and the gates in fifty-two days. He then restrained usurers, lived himself in great hospitality, and reformed the violation of the *Sabbath*. He caused the law also to be read and expounded to the people: upon which the princes, priests, and *Levites*, made a publick acknowledgment of the goodness of God, and their own wickedness, and entered into a covenant with Him, to which they set their hands and seals; That they would walk in his law, and obey Him diligently for the future.

Ezra was a very ready scribe in the law of God; and, upon his return from the captivity, collected all the books of the *Old Testament*, which were then extant, disposed them

88 *The Book of ESTHER.*

them in their proper order, and put forth a correct edition of them. It is probable, that the books of *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Malachi*, were soon after added, by which the *Jewish* canon of the Holy Scriptures was fully compleated. The books, called *Apocryphal*, or *Doubtful*, were never received as *Canonical*, and are therefore to be regarded only as common history. They, nevertheless, contain many excellent lessons of wisdom and holiness, and set forth the examples of several good men, who suffered nobly in the defence of their religion.

C H A P. XXV.

The Book of ESTHER.

AHASUERUS, king of *Persia*, had raised *Haman*, his chief favourite, to the highest honours, so that the people bowed the knee to him. But *Mordecai*, a *Jew*, refused to pay this homage, which he thought due to God alone; and, as he passed to and fro, shewed him no respect. With which behaviour the proud *Haman* was so offended, that he resolved to destroy not only him, but his whole nation also:

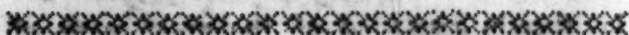
also: and, having represented them to the king, as a seditious and rebellious people, he prevailed upon him to sign a decree for the destruction of all the *Jews*, both old and young, throughout his empire.

The *Jews*, upon hearing of this bloody decree, were in very great distress, and they fasted and prayed to God, who was pleased to hear their cry, and bring about their deliverance: for the king awaking one morning sooner than usual, ordered a person to read to him the records of his reign; and being therein reminded of the great merit of *Mordecai*, who had some time before discovered the treason of two chamberlains, and saved the king's life, commanded that he should be arrayed with the royal robe, and ride through the city in triumph; and that *Haman* should lead the horse, and proclaim before him, *Thus shall it be done to the man, whom the king delighteth to honour.*

Afterwards *Esther*, the queen, who was a *Jewess*, and niece to *Mordecai*, and whom *Ahasuerus* had made his wife, on account of her great beauty and engaging behaviour, informed the king of the pride and cruelty of *Haman*, and intreated for the lives of herself and her people: and the king, being fully satisfied of

Ha-

Haman's guilt, ordered that he should be hanged upon a high gallows, which *Haman* himself had caused to be erected, with design to hang *Mordecai* on it. An edict was afterwards published in favour of the *Jews*; and two days were appointed by them to be observed yearly, as days of rejoicing, in thankful remembrance of their having been thus saved from destruction. *God putteth down the mighty from their seat, and scattereth the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*



C H A P. XXVI.

The Book of J O B.

THE time in which *Job* lived is uncertain, but his history is very affecting and improving. He is recorded as a pattern of goodness, patience, and submission to the will of God. Compassion, it is said, was brought up with him. He was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, the father of the poor, the comforter of the widow, and the protector of the orphan that had none to help him.

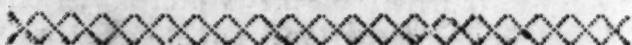
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The Almighty, who knows what is in man, and tho' He permits him to fall into temptation, yet enables him to resist it, was pleased to give up *Job*, for a time, to be afflicted and tempted by *Satan*, that the world might be fully acquainted with his virtue, and take example by it. No man ever underwent harder trials; for he was deprived of all his fortune, his friends, and his children, and suffered the most painful sickness. He was as remarkable for calamity, as he had been for prosperity: But all served only to shew his humility, and his great dependance upon God, and that the devil had no power over his mind.

When *Job's* piety had been sufficiently manifested, God restored to him more than he had lost: He gave him fortune, friends, children, and health, and all other blessings, so that the latter end of his life was still more prosperous than the beginning had been.

This excellent book warns us not to judge hardly of men in distress. God often brings the good and virtuous into affliction and trouble for wise and gracious purposes. It teaches us also, when we are blessed with plenty, to succour the distressed, and to be
the

the comforters of the afflicted : and further, it teaches us to bear with patience and submission the bitterest dispensations of providence : *What, says Job, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.*



C H A P. XXVII.

Of the PROPHETS.

A Prophet is a person empowered in an extraordinary manner, by particular revelations of the Divine will, to instruct mankind in the doctrines and duties of religion, and to foretel future events, incapable of being foreknown by man. God was pleased to raise up a succession of men for this purpose, from the beginning of the world ; and, in the course of the sacred history, we read of the exhortations which they gave to the *Jews*, the miracles they wrought, and the prophecies they delivered. Some of these inspired persons composed, and left in writing, what they preached to the people ; and we find, upon searching these important records, that

that they generally reprov'd them with great freedom and constancy, and urg'd them to their duty by serious and earnest admonitions, calling them to repentance, and sincere amendment of life. They also denounced against them the heavy, but just, sentence of the Almighty, and warn'd them of the destruction of their city and temple; of their captivity, and the many grievous calamities which hung over their heads, and were soon to overtake them, on account of their aggravated sins. They likewise administered comfort to the good and faithful, and enabled them to wait upon the Lord in patience, with the promise of a deliverance from the *Babylonish* captivity, and especially with the prospect of a spiritual deliverance, which God would vouchsafe them by the coming of a Saviour.

This, indeed, is the great subject of prophecy; and we not only find, in general, that God intended to raise up such a deliverer, who is sometimes called the *Messiah*, or the *Anointed One*; but the predictions concerning him are very circumstantial and express. They have not only specified the time, the place, and the manner of his birth, but foretold the most particular circumstances of his death
and

and resurrection ; and have related them with so much clearness and exactness, that they seem rather to be a history of what was past, than a prophecy of what was to come.



C H A P. XXVIII.

Of the Four Monarchies.

AMONG the visions and dreams, by which God was pleased to reveal to the prophet *Daniel* the conduct of his providence, concerning the state of the *Jews*, and other kingdoms, was one relating to the four great monarchies of the world ; foretelling very clearly, that the *Assyrian* or *Babylonian* empire would be destroyed by the *Persians* ; that the *Persian* would be conquered by the *Greeks* ; and the *Greeks* would be over-run by the *Romans*. These wonderful events, according to the particular course and order, in which He, on whom the changes of the world depend, was pleased to make them known, succeeded accordingly. First, the *Assyrian* empire was standing in full glory, at the time of the prophecy ; the kings of *Babylon* having subdued the two kingdoms of
Israel

Israel and *Judah*, and all the nations round them. Secondly, the *Persians*, commanded by *Cyrus*, made themselves masters of the city of *Babylon*, and extended their conquests over other nations. This was the *Cyrus*, who gave leave to the *Jews* to return to their own country, and dwell at *Jerusalem*. Thirdly, After the *Persian* monarchy had continued about two hundred years, the *Greeks*, commanded by *Alexander* the Great, king of *Macedon*, marched into *Persia*, beat their armies, and took possession of their dominions. He went also to *Jerusalem*, where he received the *Jews* into favour, and not only gave them liberty to live according to their own religion and laws, but also freed them from the payment of tribute every seventh year, because they were then forbidden to cultivate and sow their land. And, fourthly, The *Romans*, a people of *Italy*, became victorious on every side, and by degrees vanquished almost every nation of the earth. *Pompey* was their general against the *Jews*: he marched to *Jerusalem*, made a great slaughter of the people, and destroyed the walls of the city. When every country had submitted to them, and universal peace prevailed, *Augustus* was emperor of *Rome*, in whose

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whose reign our Blessed Saviour made his appearance upon earth, who came to erect his beneficent and peaceful kingdom in the hearts of men, being *King of kings, and Lord of lords.*



C H A P. XXIX.

The Life of our SAVIOUR.

TH E time being come, which had been pre-ordained by the Father, and foretold by the prophets, for the appearance of the Saviour of the world, He was born of the Virgin *Mary*, according to the prediction of *Isaiah*; *a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emanuel, God with us.*

The Almighty was pleased to reveal the mystery to *Joseph*, who was betrothed to *Mary*, that he might not entertain any unjust suspicion of her virtue; and to command him to call his name *Jesus*. He was born at *Bethlehem*, according to the prophets; for, in consequence of a taxation laid upon the people by *Augustus Cæsar*, *Joseph* and *Mary*, being of the lineage of *David*, were obliged to go to that town. There, on account of
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the multitude of the people, they were under the necessity of lodging in a stable; and she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn.

But, in the same night, his birth was made known to shepherds in the fields, by angels, who appeared to them with a bright light from heaven, proclaiming these tidings of great joy which should be to all nations, and singing triumphantly, *Glory be to God on high, peace on earth, and good-will towards men.* And soon after, some wise men of the east, having been, by some wonderful means, apprized of this happy event, came to pay their homage and adoration to Him. *Herod*, however, whom the *Romans* had set over the land of *Judah*, was much alarmed at the news, apprehending that the *Messiah* was to be a temporal prince, and looking upon Him as a rival in his kingdom. He therefore endeavoured to discover the child, with an intention to destroy him; but, being disappointed in his enquiry, he fell into a great rage, and, resolving to cut him off by any means in his power, he commanded all the infants to be slain, who were in or

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about

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about *Bethlehem*, where it was foretold that *Christ* should be born. But God discovered his barbarous intention to *Joseph* in a dream, and commanded him to take the child and his mother into *Egypt*. They went accordingly, and remained there, till God informed him by another dream, that *Herod* was dead, and directed him to return into his own country; but to go to *Nazareth*, not to *Bethlehem*, for fear of *Herod's* son, who succeeded him in the throne, and was as cruel as his father.

When *Christ* was but twelve years old, being at *Jerusalem* at the time of the *Passover*, he introduced himself among the doctors and learned men, and conversed with them in such a manner, that all who heard him were astonished at his wisdom. He afterwards retired with his parents to *Nazareth*, where he lived in dutiful subjection to them, and in a very obscure state, till the time of his manifestation to *Israel*.

Before he made his appearance as a prophet, *John the Baptist* was sent by the Almighty to prepare the minds of the people for his reception, by preaching *the Baptism of Repentance*, and pointing out to them *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.*

world. And when he was about thirty years of age, he began to exert himself suitably to the great design of his coming. But, first, he desired *John* to baptize him, to shew the value he set upon that ceremony, and his readiness to submit to every ordinance, and fulfil all righteousness. He was soon after attacked by the evil spirit in the wilderness, who tried him with very powerful temptations for forty days; but, at last, finding that he could not get any power over him, he left him. *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.*

The Saviour of the world then began to preach unto the people, that they should repent of their sins, believe in Him, and lead holy lives, in order to obtain forgiveness from God and everlasting glory. He preached many excellent sermons, and particularly one which far surpassed all discourses which were ever spoken. It is called, *the Sermon on the mount*, because he stood upon a hill, or mountain, when he spoke it. In it he teaches the prayer, called *The Lord's Prayer*, as a model for all addresses to the Deity. He explains the true sense and meaning of several moral precepts, and promises rewards to the good and virtuous. He teaches us to be

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humble, submissive, patient and forgiving, and to do all the good in our power, even to our enemies, in imitation of the great God himself, who sends his rain and fruitful seasons on the just and the unjust. He dissuades us also from all covetous desires, and anxious thoughts about the things of this world, and exhorts us to put our trust in our heavenly Father, who clothes the grass of the field, and feeds the fowls of the air; and he concludes the discourse with comparing the man, who hears his words and obeys them, to a wise man who builds his house upon a rock, which no storms can overthrow.

Our Saviour also practised what he taught, and enforced his excellent precepts by his own good example. He did no sin, *neither was guile found in his mouth.* His whole life was spent in the service of God and man. He was constant in prayer, both privately and publickly, and went about doing good to all that were in distress, healing all kinds of sicknesses and infirmities among the people. He cured the most inveterate distempers with a single touch, and sometimes with a word. He made the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, the blind to see, the dumb to speak, and raised the dead

dead to life. There was such virtue about him, that if any distempered person touched him, or even his clothes, believing and trusting in his power to cure them, they were immediately restored to health: and, though he was so poor as not to have *a place where to lay his head*, yet he relieved the wants of others, and satisfied the hunger of many thousands. We see in him also the greatest delicacy of affection, and sympathy of friendship. His concern at the grave of *Lazarus*; his lamentation over the obdurate *Jerusalem*, doomed to destruction; his last pathetic discourses to his disciples; and indeed many other scenes of his life, exhibit the most pleasing picture imaginable of divine benevolence, blended with human tenderness.

And as the benefit of his coming into the world was not to be confined to the *Jews*, but to be extended to all nations, he chose twelve apostles, and commanded them to disperse themselves abroad, and to spread his doctrines through the world; instructing the ignorant, as he did, and relieving every kind of distress: for which purpose he endowed them with the power of working miracles. He warned them, that they would frequently meet with cruel and

ungrateful returns, and be even hated and persecuted for his Name's sake; but exhorted them, nevertheless, to submit patiently, and not to be deterred from doing their duty by any threatenings or sufferings.

But notwithstanding the excellency of his doctrines and his example, he was censured and opposed by the Priests, the Scribes, and the Pharisees. The more humanity and goodness he discovered, the more he excited their displeasure; and the greater his merit, the greater was their envy and malice. They considered the purity of his life as a reproach upon their own character, and their guilty hearts could not bear the freedom of his instructions and remonstrances. They therefore not only hated him, but thought it necessary to their own interest to destroy him. Accordingly they endeavoured to puzzle and perplex him with artful and intricate questions, hoping to draw some expressions from him contrary to their law, that they might have a pretence for putting him to death. But he shewed himself as much superior to them in wisdom as in virtue, and often sent them away confounded with his answers.

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They took pains also to defame his reputation, and render him contemptible in the eyes of men; representing him under the characters of a glutton, and a wine-bibber, a companion of publicans and sinners, a sower of sedition, and a profaner of the *Sabbath*. And when they had excited a sufficient degree of animosity in the minds of the people, and had prevailed upon *Judas* to betray him, they resolved to seize him, to bring him to a trial, and, upon some pretence or other, to adjudge him to death.

He continued about three years and a half preaching to great multitudes the glad tidings of the kingdom of Heaven; and, as the time of his crucifixion drew near, he opened the understandings of his disciples more and more, and laid before them the most important matters: such as the nature of his death and suffering, the state of departed souls, the happiness of Heaven, the resurrection of the body, and the solemn process of that awful day, in which He will appear in the glory of his Father to judge all mankind.

After supper, on the night in which he was to be apprehended by his enemies, he took bread, and, having blessed it, broke it,

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and gave it to his apostles, saying, *Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.* He also took the cup of wine, and gave it to them, saying, *Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins. This do in remembrance of me.* This was the institution of what we call *the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, which our gracious Master desires, and indeed commands us frequently to partake of in remembrance of those bitter sufferings, by which He purchased for us the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. We ought to receive it with the greatest thankfulness, and a sincere resolution to dedicate the remainder of our lives to the service of God. And, indeed, the pious commemoration of our Saviour's sufferings has a natural and powerful tendency to strengthen our faith, enliven our hope, and improve us in all goodness.

The *Romish* priests, in the administration of this sacrament, give only the bread to the laity, while they take both the bread and wine themselves: whereas our Lord plainly commanded, *Drink ye all of it; all christians, of all ranks and denominations, whether clergy or laity, Eat and drink ALL of this.* They teach also, that the bread and
wine

wine are transubstantiated, or changed, into the real body and blood of Jesus. But they have no just foundation for this doctrine; for can it be supposed, that our Lord ate of his own body, and that his disciples fed upon it, before he was dead? Can his body be divided into many parts, and yet be given intire to each person? And can it be turned into the food and sustenance of our nature, as the bread and wine are? Besides, we are to eat the bread, and drink the wine, in *remembrance* of Christ; and the remembrance of a person implies his *bodily absence*. If then the bread and wine were changed into the *natural body and blood* of Christ, He would be *corporally present*, and we could be no longer said to *do this in remembrance of Him*, according to his express direction.

The *Romish* priests lay great stress upon these words of our Saviour. *This is my body, and this is my blood.* But he said also, *I am a door*; and yet, it is very plain, he did not mean to say, that he was really a door, but like a door, because, by Him, people enter the kingdom of Heaven. Another time our Saviour said, *I am the vine, and ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.* It is

evident to common sense, that this can only signify, he is like a vine-tree, and we are like the branches of it, deriving all our strength and nourishment from him, and accordingly bringing forth good fruit. In the same manner, when our Saviour says, *This is my body, and this is my blood*, the meaning must be, *This bread and this wine do signify, and represent to you, my body and my blood; and in eating and drinking of these, as my faithful disciples, you become partakers of my body and blood; that is, of the benefits of my death and passion.* But the *Roman Catholics* shamefully pervert the true meaning of *Scripture*, in order to support their false and dangerous doctrines.

May the merciful God, who has saved us *Protestants* from such great mistakes, open the minds of those poor deluded people, that they may see and repent of their idolatrous and superstitious worship!

After the institution of this *Holy Sacrament*, our Lord delivered some seasonable and comfortable exhortations to his apostles, and prayed earnestly to the *Father* for them, and all succeeding *Christians*. He then went to the garden at *Gethsemane*, to which he had often before retired, for his private devotions, and to pre-

prepare himself for the great event which was drawing near. He was there in great anguish of spirit; and, as he was labouring under the most violent agonies of mind, he intreated God, *That, if it was possible, the cup which he was about to drink (the bitter death he was about to undergo) might pass from him: but* recollecting, that without his death the great work of man's redemption could not be accomplished, he immediately added, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.* Let the same mind and temper be in us, which was in him: in all our troubles and afflictions, tho' the sharpness and weight of them may engage us to pray for deliverance, and we may lawfully endeavour to remove them, yet let us imitate the amiable resignation of our Saviour, and say, with cheerful acquiescence in the disposals of providence, *Not my will, but Thine be done, heavenly Father.*

The traitor *Judas*, with the priests and pharisees, to whom he had sold his blessed Master, followed him to this place; and, having seized him, carried him before *Pilate* the judge, and accused him as an impostor, a malefactor, and a blasphemer. And altho' these accusations were intirely groundless, and

it was evident that the *Jews* prosecuted him out of envy and malice, yet *Pilate* gave way to their importunate clamour, and condemned him to death. He was then scourged, crowned with thorns, mocked and spit upon; and after having undergone the most grievous indignities and cruel tortures, was crucified between two thieves. He permitted his enemies to have such power over him; for he willingly gave himself up to these sufferings, that He might die, *the just for the unjust*, and be a propitiation for all those who come unto God through Him. He was afterwards taken down from the cross, and buried in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock; and the *Jews*, in order to secure the body, because our Saviour had said, that in three days he would rise again, closed the mouth of the sepulchre with a large heavy stone, and set a sufficient guard to watch and defend it.

On the third day, however, our blessed Saviour, according to his own prediction, rose from the grave, and appeared to his disciples. He continued forty days upon earth, and convinced them by many infallible proofs, by frequently conversing, and eating and drinking with them, and shewing them the wounds in his flesh, that he was actually

restored to life. And when he had fully satisfied the apostles of this wonderful event, his resurrection from the dead, He informed them, *That all power, both in heaven and earth, was put into his hands*; and commanded them to preach the Gospel among all nations, and to baptize them *in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*. He also promised to send down shortly upon them the effusion of the Holy Ghost, and to be with them, to protect, assist, and comfort them, *even to the end of the world*.

The Sacrament of Baptism was instituted by our blessed Lord in the Christian church, as a solemn initiation into the covenant of the Gospel, and as an emblem or token of our being inwardly cleansed from sin, and raised to newness of life. It is true that the mere *washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, will not save us; but in this rite, or ceremony, is signified and understood an offer, on God's part, of pardon and sanctifying grace through Christ; and on ours, the obligation and necessity of being renewed in the spirit of our minds *by repentance from dead works, and the answer of a good conscience towards God*.

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After these things He led them to a mount near *Bethany*; and there, in the sight of many of his disciples, while he was blessing them, He was raised gradually from earth, and carried in a triumphant manner into heaven, where He sitteth at the right hand of God.

These circumstances and events are distinctly related by the four Evangelists, who, as we have good reason to believe, were under a Divine guidance, so as to be kept from error. For as God was pleased to send his Son into the world for the redemption of man, and to confirm his Divine mission by the most glorious attestations, it is very reasonable to conclude, that He would, by some means, cause an exact and unerring account, both of his doctrines and miracles, to be written for the instruction and direction of all succeeding ages. This is the end, according to the Evangelist *John*, for which these things were written, that we might believe that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his Name*. This believing, however, is not a mere speculative assent; for that will be of small avail to our salvation and happiness. Our Faith must be a practical vital persuasion, *a Faith working by love, and productive of a*
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Of the APOSTLES. III

sincere obedience. If we thus believe, we shall have life through his name; we shall obtain that eternal life, which is the gift of God through Jesus, to all those who truly believe in Him, and obey Him.



C H A P. XXX.

Of the APOSTLES.

OUR Blessed Lord, before he ascended into heaven, had commanded his apostles to wait at *Jerusalem* until the Comforter should come, who should lead them into all truth, and endue them with miraculous gifts and powers: and therefore they assembled frequently together, and in fervent prayer and devotion expected the coming of the Holy Ghost.

The traitor *Judas* had been so oppressed with the crime he had committed, his conscience had been so touched with the pangs and agonies of his guilt, that he sunk into despair, and hanged himself. Thus one sin generally leads to another. If he had humbled himself before the throne of grace, and implored the Divine mercy and forgiveness, that

that pity might have been shewed to him, which had been shewed by his gracious Master to *Peter*, who denied him; for *Christ* came to seek and save that which was lost, and God willeth not the death of a sinner, but had rather he would turn again and live.

It was afterwards proposed, that as the number of the apostles, originally appointed by our Saviour, was twelve, a proper person should be chosen to supply the place of *Judas*; and, upon drawing lots concerning it, the lot fell upon *Matthias*, and he was numbered with the apostles.

On the day of *Pentecost*, ten days after the ascension of our Lord, when the apostles and other disciples were met at their accustomed place, the Holy Ghost, according to the promise of their blessed Master, came down from Heaven, and communicated to them such special and extraordinary endowments, as were necessary for the task they were to execute. He guided them into all truth, and brought all things to their remembrance whatsoever *Christ* had said unto them. He inspired them with the knowledge of all languages, so that men of all nations heard them speak in their own respective tongues the wonderful works of God. He gave them power to

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inculcate the doctrines of the Gospel with such force of reasoning, as all their adversaries were not able to gainsay and resist; and also to confirm their authority by many signs and wonders, by diverse miracles and spiritual gifts; and he fortified their minds with so much courage, constancy, and patience, that they resolved to submit to every indignity and calamity, which could possibly befall them in life, rather than desert the cause of Christ, and renounce his religion.

The extraordinary assistance of the Holy Ghost was given only to the Apostles and the first preachers of Christianity for the establishment and propagation of it among men; we have now no promise of such miraculous direction; but the saving and sanctifying gifts of the Spirit still remain; He abides with the disciples of Christ for ever, to enlighten their understandings, to purify their hearts, to guard them from temptation, to comfort and support them in afflictions, and to be as a pledge or earnest of the future glorious inheritance, which is set before them in the Gospel.

Immediately after the effusion of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles began to preach, and on that day three thousand souls were converted to the faith by a powerful and affecting
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sermon preached by St. *Peter*. They went forth and spoke boldly in the face of the same great court, which had condemned their Master; and a numerous church was soon collected in the very city where he had been crucified. There was no appearance of their being gainers by what they did; there was no room for them to expect an advancement of temporal interest, or to hope for honour and reputation in the world from their undertaking: they acted intirely from the conviction of their own consciences, and a full persuasion concerning the truth and divine authority of what they taught; and the whole design and end of their labours was to persuade men to believe in Christ crucified and risen again, as their Saviour and Lord; and in pursuance of this to be holy in all manner of conversation.

For several years they preached the Gospel to the *Jews* only; after which God was pleased to shew them, that the merciful offers of salvation were not to be confined to that nation; that the partition-wall was to be thrown down, and a door opened to the *Gentiles*. They then gave up all the prejudices of their education and country, dispersed themselves through all the quarters of the

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the earth, and spent their whole lives in publishing Christianity to the world; travelling incessantly, and in a state of almost continued persecution, in which they suffered the most barbarous usage. They welcomed every difficulty and danger, which stood in the way to the accomplishment of their great purpose; they rejoiced, that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the name and in the cause of their dearest Lord and Master; and trusting in him, who is able to keep that which is committed to him, they at last laid down their lives in defence of the doctrines which they preached.

The *Roman Catholics* pretend, that there was a difference of rank among the Apostles, and that *St. Peter* had a superiority over the others; that he was bishop of *Rome*, and head of the whole church of Christ; and that the bishops or popes of *Rome* are his successors, and must be obeyed in all matters of religion.

One passage which they bring to support this notion, is that, in which our Saviour called *Peter* a rock, and then said, *Upon this rock will I build my church*. But this cannot be intended to give *Peter* any particular power and supremacy over the church. He is not the only
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foundation of the sacred building; the other Apostles were instruments, as well as He, in the glorious work, and the same honour is attributed to them in Scripture, “We, (we Christians, that is, the church) *are built upon the foundation of the Prophets and the Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*”

Another passage is that, where our Saviour tells *Peter*, “That he would give him the keys of Heaven; and that those he bound on Earth should be bound in Heaven, and those he loosed on Earth should be loosed in Heaven.” But whatever is the true sense and meaning of these words, it is certain, that the same power and authority was given to all the Apostles in general in those words of our Saviour, “*Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.*”

It does not appear that Christ gave any one of the apostles a superiority over the rest. On the contrary, He taught his disciples not to assume any authority themselves, nor implicitly to submit their faith and judgment to the authority of others. They were to call no man master upon earth; they had but one Father who was in Heaven; they had but one

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Master, who was Christ. They were to consider themselves as independent of all the world in matters of religion and conscience, and to conduct themselves as equally the servants of one Master, before whom every man is finally to answer for himself. St. Peter, in his own writings, does not claim any such superiority, nor do any of the other apostles give the least intimation of it. They speak of themselves as *fellow-labourers* in the work to which they were appointed. and disclaiming all dominion over the faith of Christians, exhort them to *stand fast in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made them free*; to try the spirits and prove all things, that they might be able to give a reason of the hope which is in them.



C H A P. XXXI.

*Of the EPISTLES and REVELATION
of St. JOHN.*

THE Epistles were written by the persons, whose names they bear; and were admitted and read in churches by the primitive Christians, who were so satisfied of their authority

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thority and genuineness, that they spoke of them not only as credible and authentic, but as divinely inspired, and as the words of the Spirit: and these books have been preserved in the main pure and uncorrupted, such as they were left by their first writers; and the translation of them, which we commonly use is in general faithful and judicious, and in the most material parts agreeable to the original.

The great design and end of the Epistles is to fix in the minds of Christians a deep sense of the excellency of the Gospel, and to engage them to behave in a manner agreeable to its precepts. They prove the universal necessity of such a dispensation, to raise men from the ruins of nature, and restore them from a state of guilt and condemnation to the favour of God. They set forth the original goodness and mercy of the Almighty Father towards us, who, upon a foresight of the wretched state into which we should fall by our sins, formed, in the councils of his eternal grace, the glorious design of our recovery. They extol the wonderful condescension and love of the only begotten Son of God, who being *the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his*

Of the Epistles and Revelation of St. John. 119

person, Heb. i. 3. became a partaker of our flesh and blood; and having been delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, Rom. iv. 25. is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Heb. vii. 25. They describe the manifold blessings and privileges, flowing to us from the divine mercy through the mediation of Christ; and lay before us the exceeding great and precious promises of a future glory and felicity in the kingdom of Heaven. They represent Faith or Believing, as the summary of what is required of us in order to the enjoyment of those blessings and promises, but declare expressly that this Faith signifies not a mere speculative assent to the truth of the Gospel, but a hearty and practical compliance with the whole method of Salvation held forth to us, through Jesus Christ. Accordingly the apostle *James* writes, that *Faith without works is dead, being alone*; and *St. Paul*, who lays the greatest stress upon Faith, shews plainly, what he intends by it, when he tells the *Galatians*, that *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love*, producing in us the sincere love of God and of mankind.

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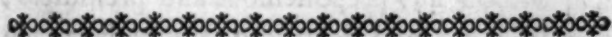
120 *Of the Epistles and Revelation of St. John.*

And he declares to the *Hebrews*, that *Christ* is the author of eternal salvation unto all them who obey Him. It is plain indeed from a multitude of passages in the *Epistles*, that the faith, by which Christians are justified and saved, is a lively and efficacious principle of religion; it is such a receiving Christ as determineth the heart to walk in him; it is a faith, which purifieth the soul, and is made perfect by good works, which they, who have believed in God, should be careful to maintain; for these things are good and profitable to men.

The last book of the New Testament is called *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*; from his own declaration in the first verse of it; *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, and which he signified by his angel unto his servant John.* There are several epistles in it to the churches of *Asia*, which he had planted, or at least cultivated and improved. The subject matter of them is very nearly the same, being either a commendation of their faith and virtue, or a reproof of their failings and defects, an and exhortation to repentance and perseverance. But several parts of this book are mysterious and prophetical, and appear to be beyond the reach and comprehension of any human understanding.

The CONCLUSION. 121

standing, many pious and learned men in all ages of the church have diligently examined and endeavoured to explain these writings; but we have reason to believe, that they have never yet been thoroughly understood by any man. They seem, however, in general to describe the state of the church at that time, in which they were written; and the future state and condition of the church to the end of the world.



CHAP. XXXII.

The CONCLUSION.

UPON account of some difficult and obscure passages in the *Scriptures*, the church of *Rome* debars the common people from reading them; and insists, that they have no right to judge for themselves in matters of faith, but are to submit absolutely to *her* interpretations and decisions. And this they endeavour to prove from a text or two in the *New Testament*; so that they would convince you from Scripture, that you have no right to judge of Scripture. What a manifest absurdity is this!—But

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surely it can never be argued, that *prove all things* means, shut your eyes, and follow the directions of the church; or that *search the Scriptures* means, never look into them; or that, *why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right*, is a command to men, to believe without inquiry, and to receive implicitly, the doctrines of others.

It becomes us, however, to peruse the sacred volumes with great humility and caution, and without any prepossessions and prejudices; not straining and torturing any passages, in order to make them fall in with our own favourite opinions, but following Scripture whithersoever it naturally leads us. Whoever would so read the *Bible*, as from thence to collect a system of faith, and determine truly what is necessary to be believed, let him not pick out single texts, or some little scraps and separate portions; nor expound any hard and difficult places in opposition to those which are clear and easy to be understood: but let him consider the nature and design of the whole revelation, and attend to the coherence and connection of the particular discourse which he is reading, the occasion of its having been written, and the true scope and design of each passage.

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The CONCLUSION. 123

Let him also read a whole book, or a whole epistle, at once, or at least to the end of proper periods, so as to discover the thread of reasoning, and have an intire view of things; and make it an inviolable rule to explain doubtful and obscure parts by those which are expressed in the clearest and most simple manner, which must be allowed to be the most natural and reasonable method of interpreting and understanding them.

Especially let us attend to the practical design of these *sacred oracles*; for the great end and purpose of *the saving grace of God* in the Gospel-dispensation, is to train us up for a blisful immortality, by a holy temper and pious conversation; *teaching us, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* And then only shall we have studied the Scriptures profitably and effectually, when we shall have learned to practice *the wisdom which is from above, and shall have purified our souls*
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in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren.

And, to our own weak endeavours for this purpose, we should add frequent and fervent prayers to God for the help and assistance of that good Spirit which indited these holy writings, and make use of that admirable collect, which the church recommends to every one, who desires to grow in the knowledge of them.

“ Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy
 “ Scriptures to be written for our learning,
 “ grant that we may in such wise hear them,
 “ read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest
 “ them; that, by patience and comfort of
 “ thy holy word, we may embrace and ever
 “ hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting
 “ life, which Thou has given us in our Saviour
 “ Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



F I N I S